

S I X T Y
S E R M O N S

ON PLAIN AND PRACTICAL
S U B J E C T S;

BY THE LATE REVEREND
T H O M A S P Y L E,

M A N Y Y E A R S
MINISTER OF LYNN IN NORFOLK,
CANON RESIDENTIARY
O F T H E
C H U R C H O F S A R U M,
AND AUTHOR OF THE PARAPHRASE
O N T H E
A C T S, E P I S T L E S, A N D R E V E L A T I O N,
I N T H E
M A N N E R O F D R. C L A R K E.

Published by his Son PHILIP PYLE, A. M.

He being Dead yet speaketh.

V O L U M E I.

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SIXTY

SERMONS

ON PLAIN AND PRACTICAL

SUBJECTS

AS THE LATE REVEREND

THOMAS PYL

MINISTER OF THE

CHURCH OF ST. JOHN, NORFOLK

IN THE

OF THE

CHURCH OF ST. JOHN, NORFOLK

AND

IN THE

CHURCH OF ST. JOHN, NORFOLK

MANUSCRIPTS

Published by his son PHILIP PYL, A.M.

In the Year 1840

VOLUME I

NORFOLK

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NORFOLK



TO THE
RIGHT REVEREND
EDMUND,
LORD BISHOP OF ELY.

MY LORD,

WHEN I thought of publishing the sermons of my late father, I was at no loss for a patron, to take them under his protection. I immediately recollected, with peculiar satisfaction, how often your Lordship had been pleased to declare how much you esteemed and even admired the author, especially in the pulpit. A declaration, my Lord, that does the highest honour to his character, and to the opinion of all persons of the best understanding who have ever seen him in that place. I speak this, my Lord, from two motives only; the regard I justly pay to your Lordship's judgment, and affection to the memory of one of the best and most indulgent of fathers.

The Sermons here presented to your Lordship and the public, except a few obvious and immaterial alterations, are in the exact state in which they came from his own mouth, and are the genuine picture of his manners and his mind.

If the reading these discourses shall revive in your Lordship the pleasure you once conceived on hearing some of them, my end will be answered; and every reader, judicious and candid like your Lordship, will be sure to receive the same entertainment.

I am,

with sincere respect,

my Lord,

your Lordship's

dutiful and very obliged servant,

PHILIP PYLE,

Norwich,

Jan. 4, 1773.

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S E R M O N I.

HEBREWS iii. 12.

*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you
an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from
the living God.*

IF in the days of the Apostles when the Christian Religion was demonstrated by miracles; and its divine truths confirmed by the sight and feelings of the heavenly powers; and the life and death of the great Savior of the world was yet fresh and warm in the hearts of Christians;---if, I say, in a time like this, there was any want of such a caution as the text carries in it; it may well be supposed not utterly needless, but even of more signal benefit, in all the lower and more distant ages of the gospel; wherein the danger may not be less, while the arguments for conviction may be imagined not so strik-

ing in their evidence, for preserving men from unbelief. To bring the Apostle's words therefore the closer home to ourselves, and to see the proper use we are to make of them; I purpose to consider,

I. What was the unbelief, or departure from God, as meant in this Apostle's times; what were the degrees and branches of it then; what they are now; and what is the evil heart that is the cause of it.

II. What are the several pretences, the pleas and dangerous insinuations, by which men are apt to be led into it. And

III. What are the proper remedies, and the best preservatives against it. Which two last heads are here recommended to your serious attention, by the words "take heed, brethren."

I. Disbelief of God, in the strict notion of *Atheism*, is a principle the Apostles of Christ had no great concern with, either to dispute against, or to dissuade men from. Through all the sensible and civilized parts of mankind, the belief of a God, of a first *cause*, and of a ruling power above, was universally professed and maintained. And it has been, and still remains with many, a question



question not easy to be answered, whether there ever were, or are now, *any* such persons, who, without any reluctance of mind or remorse of conscience, can deny the existence of a *Deity*. Indeed there always was, and it is to be feared there always will be, the tribe of people the Psalmist tells you of--the "fools that *say in their hearts* there is no God:" But none that ever so much as pretended to *disprove* the Being of a Creator: No; the *demonstration* lies all on the contrary side. But they can "*say in their hearts*"---
 ' can secretly *wish* there were none---can inwardly hope and flatter themselves that, if
 ' there *be* one, yet he takes no notice of *them*;
 ' exercises no government over them; will
 ' neither reward nor punish them.' And how come they to wish thus, and to run down their hopes to so low and mean a pitch! Why, the same Psalmist gives you the undoubted reason---"They are corrupt, and
 "become abominable in their doings:" for he, and he only, whose profligate life makes him afraid of God, would wish there were no God. There must always be an *evil heart*, before any such gross unbelief can possibly take place.

But the general crime, we are here warned against, consists, not so much in the *denying* this fundamental principle of religion, as in the *abusing* and *perverting* it---in a shameful neglect of duly improving it, and of attending to the nature and consequences of it. And this *stupid neglect* was the unbelief, or departure from God, so common in antient times. The Heathens, and even some *Jews*, were sadly guilty of it. In and after our Savior's time, the Epicurean philosophy much prevailed. Now Epicurus acknowledged a God, or indeed more Gods than one; but then he shut them all up in heaven; happy there in themselves; but never looking down, or exercising any *providence* over this lower world. So you read of the Jewish Sadduces, that *they* "believed no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit;" no immortality of the soul, no future state of rewards or punishments. But what good is there in believing a God, without believing these other articles? If God takes no notice of *us*, or of any thing we do; what is he to us? or what does our notion of his existence signify?

Again; the Jews at large, believed in God's word; in Moses and the prophets: but whereas they

they misinterpreted, and corrupted, and disobeyed those sacred scriptures; it was just the same thing, as if they had been unbelievers of them. And this, in truth, is the reigning *infidelity*, and departure from God, that has so generally spread its bane, not only among Jews, but even among Christians! It is not sufficient to denominate a man a believer, that he acknowledges a God, and a Savior, and a Word of God; unless he frequently meditates upon the word and laws of that Savior, and lives and practises according to what he believes. And you may be Atheist enough, though you do not deny your God, or renounce your creed. You are to be *accounted* such, and will effectually *be* such, if you be in the number of those, who “ profess to “ know God, but in works deny him; being “ disobedient, and unto every good work re- “ probate.”

From what has been said upon this subject, you will easily infer, what are the grand and capital articles, about which irreligious belief is concerned: namely, the Being and Attributes, the Providence, the Word, and the Future Judgment of God. Let us now enquire what is the *evil heart*, or *evil principle of mind*,

which renders such a want of belief criminal and condemnable; and which makes it more or less so, in several different men. Reason and understanding is that distinguishing faculty bestowed upon mankind alone of all the creatures that inhabit this earth, by the careful exercise and improvement of which we are enabled, and consequently obliged, to seek the great creator and to find him; to learn and to obey his will, as far as ever it is discoverable by us, for *his* glory, and *our own* happiness. In proportion to the advantages, and opportunities of instruction, which any man enjoys, by the benefit of education, and every means of improvement in moral and religious knowledge; such will be the *virtue of faith* expected from him, with respect to the great truths of religion: And in proportion as he wilfully neglects, or misapplies these advantages; in such degree will he become guilty of the crime of *unbelief*, or departure from God. Wherever there is a total and unavoidable ignorance of any truth, the belief of that truth can never be a duty: it can never be a fault to stumble, where it is impossible to see our way: But wherever, or in what portion soever, light hath been vouchsafed,

safed, and the eye is obstinately shut against it, or looks upon it without attention or conviction; *there* all the following state of *darkness* is a state of *sin*. And this may serve to teach us, what sentiments we are to entertain of those poor *beathen people*, the vices and corruptions of whose ancestors have left them destitute of all knowledge of the *one true God*, once communicated to those forefathers. When we think of them, we ought not rashly to condemn them; but to judge of them with thoughts of pity, compassion, and charity. They are in the hands of that *living God*, by whom they will be judged by such law, and such light only, as his righteous providence permitted them to live by. In like manner the *Jew* and the *Christian*, who are blest with the brighter light of a *revealed* word and law of God---*they* are bound to a belief of truths, more clearly and fully made known to them. Such revealed word ought to be held by them, as their inviolable rule of faith and practice; and to attain the true sense of it, ought to be the matter of their chief study, and most conscientious care. All wilful ignorance or misunderstanding of this divine word, every perversion of it, and de-

viation from it, is so far a *departing* from that *God*, whose word it is. More especially still; all opposition to religion, and its sacred truths, merely because it would restrain our lewd and lawless pleasures;---all impious cavils raised against it, only to favour men's worldly lusts, or vicious inclinations---all these are *indeed* the offspring of an *evil heart*; which it is no wonder if it be fruitful of the grossest unbelief, of things the most credible, and worthy of all acceptance.

II. I come now therefore to shew you, what may have been, or still *are*, the usual pretences, and dangerous insinuations, whereby men are apt to be drawn by others, or to draw themselves, into this *sin*, with relation to the Existence, the Providence, the Word and Laws, or the Future Judgment of God: And, III. How we are to avoid, or to secure ourselves against them. But these second and third heads I shall comprise in one; since they are both together recommended to your serious consideration in the former part of the text; “*take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.*”

First then, as to the *being* of God---take heed that no low and vulgar *objection* cause
you

you to suspect it, or to cherish any vicious hopes against the certainty of it. The holy scriptures do not only allow, but affirm, that "no man hath *seen* God at any time: He is "the invisible potentate, whom no man *hath* "seen, nor *can* see:" But it would be the most shameful ignorance and stupidity, to conclude there is no such being, only because he is not the object of our *senses*. Common reason, and daily experience confutes it. You even *see* God, as much as you can see the *winds*, and the *air*; not indeed with your *eyes*, but by *effects* that demonstrate the reality of them. You *feel* the wind in every refreshing *gale*; and *see* it in every *ship** that sails. You breathe the *air* every moment, and live by its influence every day and hour. In like manner, without the supposition of the one eternal, all-wise, and all-powerful *cause*, you never could have seen *any thing else* existing; nor, but in and by *him*, could *you yourself* at all have lived, or moved, or had *your own* being. Farther---you both *see* and *feel*

* These Sermons were all preached in a large sea-port town; which, it is hoped, the candid reader will think a sufficient reason for this, and some few other allusions, to naval and commercial affairs.

feel your maker in your own *soul*: and he that doubts the being of God, because he does not *see* him, ought to demand a sight of his *own soul*, in order to be convinced that he himself is a living being. In short, you see, and perhaps comprehend too, as much of the *intimate essence* of God, as the highest angel in heaven can do: for that infinite nature is, in all probability, equally incomprehensible by all *finite* beings. It is enough for the greatest and most exalted of *them*, let it therefore be enough for *you*, that you *see* him in all the beauties and glories of his *works*; and feel and know him by your own powers and existence. When *Philip* desired of *Christ*, that “he would shew him God the Father;” the answer was full and sufficient; “he that “hath seen ME, hath seen the FATHER also” --- “if you see *him*, who by demonstrative evidence brings you the *will* of God; you “see all that *can* be seen of God.”

Moreover; great heed is to be taken, that, while we *believe* a God, we suffer not our thoughts and *conceptions* of him to be *depraved* and *corrupted*. The antient *Heathens*, who were no *Atheists*, “departed from the living God” in *this*;---that, though they had light enough

enough to *know* him, yet “they *glorified* him not *as* God;” but were “vain in their *imaginations concerning him.*” And the *Jews* likewise---*they* departed from him, when they mixed his divine worship with *idolatrous* rites and services. And thus do *we*, whenever we suffer ourselves to entertain any unjust and unworthy ideas, any vain or fond notions of God; as if he were an arbitrary, a negligent, or a capricious governor of his creatures. It is not only folly, but great wickedness in *man*, to think that his God is such a one as himself,

2. Take heed that no present external and mistaken *appearances*, work in your minds any disbelief of the *providence* of God, in the government of the world. In the natural world, we are wont to remark many things, that carry with them a present *face* of *evil* and inconvenience; hardly consistent, in the imagination of some weak minds, with a constant hand of good and wise direction. Along with the glorious and comfortable light of the sun, we have eclipses and darkness and blazing comets. Beside the fruits of the earth, and the treasures of the sea, and the health of the air and seasons; we feel hurri-
canes

canes and tempests, burning mountains and devouring earthquakes; and are sometimes struck with diseases and pestilence and sudden deaths. These, by hasty and short-sighted enquirers, are apt to be considered as defects in nature, or objections against providence;---never reflecting, that in so vast and immense a scheme, as the creation and government of a whole world, there must necessarily be comprehended such an extent of time, such an infinitude of things, with such innumerable relations and circumstances of them, so corresponding, so linked together; that it is no wonder *we*, or creatures far above *us*, should not be able to see through all their connections. In the mean while, as the many thousand indisputable proofs of wisdom, goodness, and beauty, in the several parts of nature, satisfy every wise and good man of the same excellencies throughout the whole; --- who, but a base and ungrateful creature, would forget what is plain, for the sake of something that remains obscure; or give up the good he *does* see, for a supposed evil which he can *not* see! Let one instance serve to clear up whatever may puzzle the unphilosophic observer, either in the sea or
land

land---*Storms* are looked upon as dreadful things; and so they are, as to the *particular sufferers*: but, in the *general*, were there never any of these, the air would be unfit to fan your blood; the sea would putrify; and your life and breath, and all *navigation*, would perish and be lost together.

Take again the *moral* world, and its government, into your thoughts; and be not startled into *unbelief*, at the sight of a promiscuous occurrence of good and evil to all ranks of men: though you may sometimes behold truth and virtue forsaken, and friendless; while vice and error and injustice thrive like the spring, and many of the authors of them are sitting in warmth or prosperity, or riding in triumph. Were the present life the full and only state of man's existence; were nothing to be seen or expected beyond the last *closing of our eyes*; these things would indeed be very hard to account for. But if this world be, what religion and our own best reflections declare it to be, a scene of *trial* and *probation*; to cultivate the virtues of free and rational creatures; to educate and qualify us for a future and superior state;--it will *then* remain no wonder, that the divine wisdom

dom and goodness should suffer good men to be exercised by the evils, or bad ones to be tempted by the good fortunes of life. If you will look upon man in his noblest and sublimest character, as a free agent, a moral and religious creature; you will no longer behold these prosperous sons of fortune with an evil eye, or a discomposed heart; nor envying say of them, "lo, these are the ungodly; these prosper in the world, and have riches in possession." Nor will you say of yourselves; "then have I cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency." No; the greater the corruptions of the world about us are; the greater care is required of us, not to be infected by them; the more splendid and illustrious will be our reward, for having kept our hands in innocency.

3. Let us take heed of departing from God, by either denying the truth of his holy word, or (which is even as bad) by polluting and prophaning the sense of it. To secure us from the former, from suspecting the truth of Christianity; let it be our first and great care to understand it well; --- I do not mean, to understand the whole, and every

every single text and passage in the Bible; but to get a competent knowledge of the main and grand design of it, as a direction of our lives and practices, in order to our pleasing God, and obtaining happiness. And this it is no difficult matter for any plain honest man to do: there are abundance of clear scriptures, that will soon make him satisfied about it---Such are these---“ For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.”

“ The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God.”

“ The end of the commandment is charity, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.”

“ Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”

“ This is the will of God, even your sanctification; that ye should abstain from fornication;

“ nication; that no man go beyond, or de-
“ fraud his brother, in any matter; because
“ that the Lord is the avenger of all such:
“ as we also have forewarned you, and testi-
“ fied.”

“ God will render to every man according
“ to his deeds: to them who by patient con-
“ tinuance in well-doing, seek for glory and
“ honour and immortality, eternal life: but
“ unto them that are contentious, and do
“ not obey the truth, but obey unrighteous-
“ ness, indignation and wrath; tribulation
“ and anguish upon every soul of man that
“ doth evil, but glory, honour and peace to
“ every man that worketh good: for there is
“ no respect of persons with God.”

Now draw your conclusion, and it will
be a safe one--- ‘ A religion, the evident
‘ and uniform design of which, is to make
‘ men good; to instruct, to exhort, to en-
‘ courage, to enable them to be so --- this
‘ can never be a false religion.’

If then you are convinced that the gospel
came from God, and is a revelation of his
righteous will; let it be your next and most
especial care, never to interpret any of its
doctrines by your own favourite systems and
opinions

opinions; never to wrest the meaning of its sacred precepts, to give a sanction to any selfish and impure desires. It is this "evil heart," that has made all the "shipwreck of faith," and all the sad havock in the Christian church. Where the lust of power and riches and dominion prevailed, "Thou art Peter," "and upon this rock will I build my church," and "feed my sheep"---was enough to erect all the tyranny of Popery; and "I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven," to be a foundation for the Clergy's pride, and a warrant to them to grant indulgencies to the sins and vices of the people. The case will be the same with us all, without a due regard to the rule I have mentioned. Passions, unrestrained by virtuous principles, will of course produce their baneful effects: The "carnal mind will always be at enmity with God," in some shape or other. He that is of a worldly temper, will never read of "not loving the world"---or of "not laying up treasures upon earth"---or of "doing good"---but, like the young man in the Gospel, he "will go away sorrowful." How hard a lesson to an ambitious man, is that of "sitting down in the lowest room---in ho-

"nour preferring one another!" To say it in a word; it is hard to believe, hard to understand, and harder still to practise, what you have been used, *not* to love.

4. Finally; as the last and concluding caution, let us all beware of any dangerous misapprehensions, concerning the great and future Judgment of God. Let no man presume to put that ludicrous and ignorant question of the unbelievers of St. Peter's days; "where is the promise of his coming"--- 'all things go on as they have done for thousands of years past; and Providence appears 'to intend no alteration.' Alas for the blindness of a deluded heart! He that inhabiteth eternity, can lose no time. A thousand years, in the government of a world, may seem long to a weak eye; but in *his* sight, they "are "but as yesterday." Whenever the fatal hour arrives, a wicked man will think it too soon to be sent into punishment; and the good man will feel no loss of time, when he shall see an eternity before him, wherein to receive the crown of glory, which God the righteous judge shall then give to *him*, and to all those who love his appearing. To whom be praise and dominion both now and for ever. Amen.

S E R M O N II.

JOHN ix 4.

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

THESE words of our blessed Saviour were occasioned by a question put to him by some of his disciples, about the case of a man that was born blind: "Master, " who did sin, this man, or his parents, that " he was born blind?" as if they imagined, that such an evil never befel any man, but as a punishment for some notorious crime or other. The persons who proposed this query, seem plainly to have been (as many Jews then were) of the opinion which old Pythagoras spread in the world; namely, " that " the souls of men existed, before they came " into the present state; and were removed

“ out of one body into another, a better or
 “ a worse, in reward or punishment either
 “ of their own former actions, or of the ac-
 “ tions of their parents.” For, the words
 evidently suppose, that the blind man might
 have committed sin, before he was born, and
 in some prior condition of being; of which
 sin, this blindness was now the punishment.

Our Lord (according to his constant me-
 thod in all such curious questions) does not
 at all decide the thing in the general; only,
 as to this particular man, he tells them, that
 the evil *he* suffered, was not the effect of any
 such cause as they ascribed it to, but was a
 mere act of providence, not uncommon to
 several other persons, in this life, who had
 not particularly deserved it above the rest.
 “ Neither hath this man sinned, nor his pa-
 “ rents; but that the works of God should
 “ be made manifest in him:”--The meaning
 is, ‘ You are mistaken as to the special reason
 ‘ of this man’s blindness; but you will do
 ‘ well to consider, what a wise end, and
 ‘ happy use the Divine Providence has put it
 ‘ to, by making it the occasion of the mira-
 ‘ culous cure I shall now work upon him,
 ‘ and of demonstrating to you the power of
 ‘ God,

‘ God, that accompanies my preaching, and
‘ confirms my doctrine.’ Hereupon he bids
his disciples take notice, with what rea-
diness and chearfulness, with what care and
diligence, he embraced this, and all other
opportunities of accomplishing the great
work, for which God was pleased to send
him into the world. “ I must work the
works of him that sent me, while it is day.”
Nor was it our Lord’s only intention in these
words, to let them see his *own* activity, and
solicitude to improve the time of his short
life upon earth: he designed, no doubt, to
shew himself, both to them and to us, as an
example for our imitation. “ I must work
“ the work of him that sent me; ‘ and if
‘ you will be my disciples indeed, so must
‘ you too: You have a work to do, when I
‘ am gone: follow my pattern, and lose no
‘ time; for the night cometh, wherein no
‘ man can work.’

Now the words, thus introduced with this
moral, will lead us to consider,

I. The Work of our blessed Saviour’s life,
and how well and diligently he performed it.

II. The work and business of our own
lives, as we are his disciples; and what light

and encouragement we receive from contemplating *his*, to the due discharge of *ours*.

III. The time allotted us for this work; with the danger of mispending, or neglecting that time: "while it is *day*; the night com-
"eth, when no man can work."

I. The work of our Saviour's life consisted of two principal parts: 1. The office of teaching and instructing; and, 2. The confirming, and proving to men, his divine commission and authority. In the former, we may consider the doctrines he taught, and his manner of teaching them. In the doctrines of our Lord, we see every character, by which he had been long ago described as a true prophet of God. He was the light of the world; giving sight to them that were in darkness; instructing the ignorant; rectifying the erroneous; converting and amending the wicked. His grand design was, to reform and to save a depraved and lost world; to bring men back to the exercise of that plain and pure Religion, which right reason, and uncorrupted nature, at first taught, and designed them for. Accordingly, his representations of God, and of his worship, are the cure of all error, blindness, and superstition.

tion. He hath set him forth to us, as the one supreme, infinite, and eternal mind; the original creator, and author of all things; the fountain of all wisdom, and the perfection of all goodness. The worship, honour, and reverence we are to pay him, is to be chiefly and properly *spiritual*; an homage of intelligent and dependent creatures, to the almighty Lord and Father of spirits. Of all teachers in the world, Christ is the greatest enemy and abolisher of *Priestcraft*. He has cleared the doctrines of religion, of every artful mystery, of every cloudy and designing notion. He has freed its devotion from all needless incumbrances, affected gayeties, and solemn fopperies. For God, says he, "is a spirit; "and they that worship him, must worship "him in spirit and in truth." He has charged all his Apostles and Ministers, to behave themselves like stewards and fellow-servants; not as "lords over God's heritage, "but as ensamples to the flock." They cannot, without the highest wickedness, impose either upon the understandings, or upon the interests of mankind. They have no doctrines of their own. To them, and to their people, Christianity has given but one law, "one
B 4 "faith,

“ faith, one baptism, one God and Father of
“ all, who is above all, and through all, and
“ in them all.”

Moreover, the duties prescribed by our Saviour, relating to ourselves, and to one another, are the very actions and qualities, that alone can become a rational creature, and raise it to the perfection of its nature; whereby alone it can be happy in itself, and acceptable to its maker in whose image it was formed. They are fitted to beings placed in society: when they are practised, families live at ease, and in plenty; towns are in prosperity, and kingdoms in peace; when they are violated, an evil conscience breaks all inward rest, and public mischiefs distract the world. Such are the virtues of purity of heart, and meekness of soul, and the good government of all the passions of the mind; the love of God; the hunger and thirst after righteousness; and the moderation of all worldly desires. Such again, are the justice, equity, and charity, which endear and unite private men, and public bodies; that prepare us all for the society of Heaven, by teaching us first to be humane and social here upon earth. Now these are the principal

pal subjects of our Lord's preaching, of his discourses, and parables; which have all one general object in view; namely, the reducing religion to its primitive standard; to just and pious notions of God; to a service of him, that is rational, pure, and spiritual; and to such rules of behaviour towards ourselves and each other, as the nature and happiness of man require.

With respect to all the other branches of his doctrine, wherein our *faith* is to be exercised; *they* are to be considered as the *sanctions* or *motives*, whereby to induce men, with greater persuasion, to embrace and observe this plain and necessary religion. Thus, that "he is the Son of God;" that "he was sent into the world, to redeem us by his death;" that "he is to be the Judge, as well as the Saviour of mankind;" these, I say, with other the like articles of our belief, are so many arguments, and circumstances attending his religion, that have their use in persuading us to obey him in the great *duties* before-mentioned.

Such was the substance of our divine Master's preaching: Let us now remark the *manner*, in which he performed that important

tant work ; how wisely he adapted his discourses to the tempers and dispositions of his hearers. He had, at first, a set of men to deal with, that were full of prejudice, ignorance, vice, and pride. To such men as these, how proper was it for a teacher of religion to enforce the qualifications, without which they could neither find out the truth themselves, nor be capable of receiving it from *Him* ! Thus he taught the Jews, in this Gospel of St. John ; that if “ any man “ would come to God,” he must be “ inclined “ to do the *will* of God ;” he must give up his lusts, and darling prejudices ; must hearken fairly, be open to conviction, and be honest at the bottom. He must lay aside the love of honour which men may give him, for the sake of his post, his interest, or his learning ; and must have the “ love of God abiding in him.”

Our Lord is no less admirable for the *Plainness* of his doctrine. The figures and similitudes, under which he conveyed his lessons, agreeably to the custom of those times, are perfectly natural, and most wonderfully suited to the genius and principles of the persons he was to instruct. Nay, they are as easy and intelligible

intelligible to *us* now, as if we had lived amongst the very people he was teaching. I could here give you a great variety of instances; but take only the two beautiful parables of the prodigal Son, and the good Samaritan; and try if any philosopher upon earth ever wrought up any thing to a finer pitch;—the one for expressing the extensive love of God to mankind; the other for gaining an universal charity of men towards one another. But his moral lectures, in the famous Sermon upon the Mount, are all instruction, and clearness itself; levelled to every capacity, and liable to no capricious interpretations, nor ignorant misconstructions; delivered with such gravity and sweetness, such authority and reason, as must render the mixture of simplicity and greatness that shines through them, most affecting upon every sincere mind. The humility likewise, and condescension, that tempered all the majesty of our Saviour's discourses, is another lovely circumstance of this branch of his Work. His arguments were strong, and yet tender; they convinced the hearts of good men, without shocking or terrifying them. His words conveyed the loud truths of Heaven,

ven, without thunder and amazement; and his behaviour was attended with a dignity, that was all winning and persuasive; full of forbearance and mercy towards those, whom he could not convince. There is but one single instance of *severity* in his language to any persons. He called the malicious and incurable Pharisees, "hypocrites," and a "generation of vipers; fools, and blind." In this, indeed, he is too much above *us*, to be our example. *We* cannot possibly know the hearts, nor all the circumstances of the men, whom we esteem most wicked; for which reason *we* must never be forward to pass judgment, nor pretend to fix characters. But HE, who knew what was in man, looked into their very souls, and saw the gall and bitterness of them. His sentence therefore was just and needful; HIS reproaches were warrantable and true.

Finally; this blessed Master consummated and adorned his work of teaching, by his own personal example, in every instance of the duties he taught. He not only read us the theory of heavenly virtues, but let us see the experiments of them all. He lived them over, as he taught them;---demonstrated to

us

us how practicable they are, by shewing them to us drawn out in the full beauties of our own human nature. And though HIS life was more, and higher, than the life of a mere man; yet, by setting before us the pattern of a sinless and a perfect man, he has led us, by the most engaging motive, to imitate the life which we can not equal, and to learn of him as disciples, though not as rivals, in god-like excellencies. Such a teacher mankind wanted; — one that could shew them the *practical* part of duty: and HE it was, above all others, that had a right to say to us, “learn of ME; for I myself am meeke, and “lowly in heart.”

2. The second part of our Saviour's Work upon earth, was the confirming his doctrine and authority, by proper evidences and demonstrations of divine power. And in the exercise of that power, he fulfilled the most amiable branch of the description that had been given of him, by God's ancient inspired prophets. “He shall not strive, nor cry, nor “lift up his voice in the streets. He shall “not break the bruised reed, nor quench the “smoking flax:” that is, ‘he shall convince men of his divine commission, not by
‘ methods

‘ methods of rigour and severity, but of gentleness and mercy. His works shall carry in them no terrors, to affright men into faith and obedience; but such reason and goodness, as tend to help the weak; to recover them that are fallen; and to reform and persuade the obstinate into a better mind.’ Accordingly, it is one of the remarkable qualities of the *miracles* of our Lord, that they were not “ signs from Heaven,” with thunder and fire, to astonish and confound the spectators; but were spent in acts of love and benignity to the persons of those he came to convert; in instances of goodness towards the bodies, as well as the souls of men. He healed the sick; and cured the lame; and raised the dead. He relieved the heart of any afflicted creature, that came in his way: and the very hand that was to demonstrate him to be a Saviour in another world, wrought miracles to take away our sorrows, and our miseries, even in the present one. In a word; the miracles of other prophets were, for the most part, works indeed of power, and of wonder; but those of Jesus alone, were altogether works of mercy. Nor should we forget one valuable quality more,
in

in all these works of his; and that is, the modesty, the perfect freedom from all vain glory, and love of worldly applause, which added beyond measure both to their worth, and their beauty. Impostors of all kinds, nay some tolerably good people, are fond of the praise of their own actions. The blessed Jesus needed it not, and loved it not. When he had done a great and beneficent work, his language was, "tell it to no man; give God the glory."

3. Let us observe, in the last place, how diligent and speedy our heavenly Master was, in the execution of this work of his life.

"While it is day," says he; "the night cometh, when no man can work." It was but a short life he spent amongst us; but a small number of years, from his entrance upon his ministry to his death. But never was life so well spent; never so much work done, in so little time. Through the whole period, you will find him in no retirement from business; except for little more than one month in the Wilderness: and you will not think he had nothing to do, even there; when you remember the fastings, and the devotions, he went through; and the temptations
he

he endured, and overcame with triumph. All the rest of his ministry, you do not read of him, at any one time, in any one place, at any juncture, but in the work and labour of his office. Not one day of diversion; not an hour of mere amusement; but something always doing; some occasion always taken for mens improvement and reformation. He instructed his disciples in some good point or other, from every circumstance that offered; in the house, or in the field; in his walks, or at the table; at home, or abroad; among friends, or enemies; from every thing, in short, he either saw or did. Thus---looking upon the *flowers*, he reminded them of that gracious power, that clothes the grass, and lilies of the field; and thence drew a lesson of religious dependence upon the divine Providence over us --- “Why take ye thought for raiment? consider the lilies how they grow --- Shall he not much more clothe you?” Observing the *trees*, he warned them against hypocrisy, and outward shew; and taught them to judge of the value of men, as they would of those plants, by the goodness of their *fruits*. As he walked about the *Temple*, where the *sheep* were kept in folds
for

for sacrifice; he represented himself as the "true spiritual shepherd," and good Christians as his "true spiritual sheep." When he was among the *vineyards*, upon the Mount of Olives; he made himself the "heavenly vine," and his faithful disciples "the branches." At *Lazarus's death*, his discourse turned upon "the resurrection," and "eternal life." When the multitude followed him, in hope that he would *feed* them miraculously as he had done the day before; he took that opportunity of exhorting them, to seek the superior and immortal "bread of life:" "labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for *that* meat which endureth unto everlasting life." To mention no more, out of almost numberless passages --- when his Disciples desired him to refresh himself, and to take some meat, after a long course of travelling and preaching; he did not refuse their offer; but then he laid hold on the occasion to excite them to observe, and to follow, his example: "I have meats to eat," says he, "that ye know not of. My meat is, to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

The evangelical history is but short: yet the discourses, and the miracles recorded, are

very numerous. But of those discourses and sermons and miracles, we have only the principal and most important. St. John tells us, that to have been particular in the relation of them, would have taken up many volumes. "The world itself, says he in the high Eastern figure, "could not contain the books "that should be written." Which may abundantly satisfy us, that this precious life had every moment of it filled, with something done, or something suffered. I say with something *suffered*; for there were very few of his arguments, wherein he did not find some one or other to contradict, and to revile him. Hardly could he shew a mercy, in curing a lame man, or giving sight to a blind one, for which he was not censured, suspected, and blasphemed. Thus he continued, till his last retirement before his death; wherein he had nothing remaining, but to address himself, and his whole work to the supreme Father, in these words of unparalleled comfort: "And now, Father, glorify thy Son: "for I have glorified THEE on the earth; I "have finished the work which thou gavest "me to do."

Thus

Thus have I, in a small compass, represented to you the great Work of your Saviour's life. I can only just remind you, that this is not intended so much for your admiration, as for your imitation. His work here could have no other end, but to point out to us, what *our* work ought to be; and what diligence is expected in our discharge of it. But this is what will afford sufficient matter for another discourse.

To God, only wise, &c.

SERMON III.

JOHN ix. 4.

I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.

I Have already, in as short a compass as I could, represented to you the work of our blessed Saviour's Life here upon earth; and how well and diligently he performed it. The proper use we are to make of what was then said, is not barely to admire a life so useful and excellent, but to imitate, and learn from it; to learn the business and duties of our own lives; and to improve the light and encouragement we receive from contemplating *his* work, to the due discharge of *ours*— The consideration of which great point, is the second part of my first proposal.

II. The same Almighty Father, who sent the Saviour into the world, hath sent *us* also; and hath bestowed on us powers and faculties, designed for a life of reason, religion, and virtue. And *his* life has lost all its benefit and effect, if it be not made the rule, and guide, and example for *our* conduct. The work of Christ has indeed some things in it, that are far above us, and far beyond the reach of our imitation. We have no miracles to perform, nor power to perform them; nor doctrines nor commissions to demonstrate by them. *His* miracles, and those of his Apostles, have done all this to our hands; and they, who now pretend to new miracles, do it only to establish some new, and false doctrine. But the moral graces, that adorned our Saviour's life; and the rules he so beautifully exemplified, through the whole course of it; the spirit and temper with which he taught, and conversed, and did all his works---*these* are the patterns for *us* to copy, and the sublime subjects of our imitation. In endeavouring after which, every Christian will find himself concerned,

1. In a general work, in duties that belong to us all: and,

2. In

2. In some particular measures and degrees of the same virtues, arising from his own peculiar abilities, and from the circumstances and situation he is placed in.

1. The work that belongs in common to all Christian people, consists in furnishing their minds with the true Christian principles, and then reducing those principles to an habitual practice of goodness and virtue. To entertain just and rational ideas of God; to think of him as our creator, governor, redeemer and judge, with a profound sense of gratitude, honour and reverence; to meditate upon the ways of his providence, the righteousness of his commands, and the mercy of his salvation, with such intenseness of thought, and seriousness of resolution, as will produce in us a pious and constant obedience to his will; to banish all false and unbecoming notions of him, which are disgraceful to his religion, and deprave the morals of those who profess it; to adore and worship him without superstition; to pray to him for blessings, and magnify him for mercies, with pure affections and sincere thankfulness;---these are the principles, that equally belong to all Christians, and ought to possess the
breasts

breasts of all men. Moreover, these principles, with all the lovely virtues flowing from them, can never be better understood, nor more clearly seen, than as they are illustrated in the life and example of our blessed Master; the life he spent in devotion and honour to God, and in doing good to mankind; a life of the most unaffected and absolute piety; of unwearied attendance upon the noblest office, that of reconciling men to God, and God to men; of teaching, instructing, and persuading them into the belief of the greatest truths, and the practice of the greatest actions. And, in the imitation of this divine pattern, every Christian has his proper sphere to act in; every one has his own person to take a prime care of; his own heart to improve in generous, humane, and tender sentiments; his own spirit to govern by rules of wisdom, and the joint motives of interest and duty; and his own passions, pleasures, and desires to subdue by reason, and to keep them in orderly and just bounds. An arduous work, even this alone! But no man is born for himself only: he has others to mind, and to take care of. His relations, his family, his neighbours, indeed the whole

whole world around him, claims a share in his conduct. His children will require his diligence and industry, for their maintenance and their fortunes; his prudence, piety, and good example, to qualify them for the business of this life, and at the same time to form their tempers and their morals for the more important employments of the next. His servants expect from him the justice, candour, and good-nature of a master: his neighbourhood demands all the kindness, equity, and good turns, that may promote peace and friendship: the rich and the great must have the respect and honour due to *them*, and the poor will want his charitable and helping hand. Whenever therefore I think at all seriously, on this work of the life of man, especially of a Christian; I am astonish'd at the miserable account, abundance of thoughtless creatures have to give of themselves, and of the life they lead.

I am not now pointing at the more profligate and profane; the cruel, or the oppressive; but at the men of the mere idle, and pleasurable life; who have fortunes that set them above the labour and drudgery of business, and therefore imagine they have nothing
at

at all to do; who seem to think they were sent into the world, as the leviathan was into the sea, "to take their pastime therein." As if an incessant round of sporting and dissipation could be the great end of the life, or were a worthy entertainment and employment for the mind, of a rational creature, formed for virtue and society. This is a sad error, as common as it is! 'To do mischief will call for the heaviest sentence: and the next to that will be, to do no good, and to live for nothing.' But,

2. There are particular degrees of the virtues above-mentioned, arising from the several abilities, situations, and circumstances of different men in the present world. We are a set of creatures, put into life together, in order to carry on the great and good designs of our common Lord, by mutually promoting the comfort and happiness of each other. To this end, there are a variety of offices, posts and stations assigned us: and the duties and work of every one of them, are as plain, as the conditions themselves in which we are placed. Some, for instance, enjoy riches; surely not for their own use alone; for if so, God would not have failed to bestow these
riches

riches with the same general distribution, as he has understanding, and reason, and senses, and appetites. No; the men that have them, are his *stewards*; and are to dispense them in such a manner, as may cause the amiable qualities of bounty, compassion, and generous goodness, to shine among mankind. Others, again, are poor, not because the divine and all-bountiful Providence takes pleasure in the wants of any of his creatures; but that those wants may be patiently and dutifully submitted to, and be a suitable trial of a great and good mind; and, at the same time, may call forth the laudable benignity of others, whom the same Providence hath blessed with plenty and prosperity. Some, moreover, are intrusted with power; not to do with it as they please; God forbid! That is the sentiment of none but low and brutal minds; and will never be long and quietly endured, unless by mean, degenerate, and servile spirits. But the man of power is God's image, and God's vicegerent; and *his* work is to imitate his Lord, in the exercise of his power;---in doing good; in defending right; in preserving property; in promoting arts and sciences; rewarding the ingenious, and the

the industrious; and raising the credit of every useful invention, for the good of his country, and the welfare of mankind. Such a man may even be said to be a *God* to men; by scattering away all mischief with a watchful eye; by being the reformer and revenger of all iniquity; a terror to evil-doers, a praise and a blessing to them that do well.

Once more; upon many the all-wise Providence has conferred rank and titles, birth and honours. A noble advantage, that adds a lustre to all their virtues, and renders their good example of happy and extensive influence upon the conduct of others; to the glory of their Maker, and the unspeakable benefit of their inferiors, among whom they shine as lights in the world. For such men do *then* indeed become truly honourable, when, beside the splendor which they derive from their ancestors, their own good actions give them character, and that character gives them an ascendancy over the minds of men; for cooling their resentments; composing their differences; procuring peace; and winning them over to the love and practice of whatever is excellent and praise-worthy. But where none of these respectable qualities are
to

to be found, and the honours of the man are merely nominal, without merit, without internal worth; he is so far from rising above the level of his own species, that he is justly compared by the holy Psalmist to the beasts that perish.

Finally; to as many more, God has given learning, and superior knowledge: not to make them proud and vain; but that they may diffuse their light, communicate their knowledge to others, and be the admired instruments of refining and improving human life and manners; which is really to promote the glory of God. They, more especially, whose sacred office it is, to carry on the same gracious work, for which the Son of God came into the world; namely, the instructing and saving the souls of men;--woe be to *them*, if they should "preach up themselves, "and not Christ Jesus their Lord; if they "handle the word of the Lord deceitfully, "and do not adorn the doctrine of God their "Saviour in all things; by pureness, by "knowledge, by long-suffering, by the word "of truth;" and by a life agreeable to *his*, who is the author and fountain of all truth.

The

The heads I have thus briefly put together, are sufficient, I hope, to convince you, how fitly our present life may be considered as a state of discipline and education for another, wherein we are to be finally and immutably fixed; how properly the holy scriptures have represented it to us under the figure of a "stewardship," wherein these faculties of ours in common, these several particular stations and circumstances of life, are so many "talents" committed to our care and management by the sovereign Lord of all; who will expect an account to be given up by every one of us.

There would be no end of enlarging upon the generous and sublime motives, with which a view of the work of our Saviour's life will supply every Christian, in every point of moral and religious duty. I shall just lightly touch upon a few general instances.

The Son of God uniformly directed all *his* actions to the honour of the Almighty Father. How therefore can a disciple refuse to devote his life to the service of that God, whom our supreme Master thus served and glorified?

The

The Lord of Heaven freely left those sacred realms of bliss, on purpose to do good to the Sons of men. And shall not this engage and charm us all, to love, and to seek the good of each other?

Although the blessed Jesus was possessed of all treasures, yet "for our sakes he became "poor, that he might make us rich." Go then, thou rich worldling! shut up thy bowels of compassion against thy worthy and indigent brother; and then what a figure of a Christian art thou, to pretend that there is any "love of God abiding in thee!"

Lastly; God hath honoured, and highly exalted, this humble Saviour, for his unexampled condescension, and goodness to mankind. How eminently then are we taught, that to be good is the way to be great; and that humility is the sure means of real fame, and everlasting glory! "Let this mind be "in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: "who humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, "and given him a name that is above every "name."

Such

Such are the arguments by which the scriptures would induce us to copy the divine pattern that is laid before us : arguments, as affectionate and interesting, as the example they recommend is great and adorable : arguments of gratitude to our redeemer, of duty to our maker, and a regard to our own future and eternal well-being. And if these considerations will not prevail with men to follow his steps, religion has no plainer, no stronger, to offer. Therefore,

III. The last thing the text directs us to attend to, is the *time* allotted us for this our work, with the fatal danger of neglecting or mispending that time. "While it is day : the night cometh, wherein no man can work." The *day* signifies not only life in general, (as the *night* signifies death) but that part of it especially, which is fit and proper for work ; ---the *morning*, and the rest of the lightsome and cheerful part of it : ---the time when our faculties are sound, our understandings clear, and all our powers and opportunities for virtue, and the service of God, favourable, and in full vigor. And here, again, we have a sad prospect of the conduct of Christians ! For what is it that men most usually

usually do with this flowery period of life? Why, instead of treading in the footsteps of their Saviour, they pursue sensual pleasures, throw up the reins to lust and folly; or hunt after vanity; and grasp at needless plenty. Seldom remembering the one thing needful; quite forgetting that the most precious thing that can ever be bestowed upon them, is *time*; and that when *this* is once lost, or squandered away, it is not all the gold of Ophir, nor all the riches of the East Indies or the West, can purchase a single moment of it back again. Yet this inestimable jewel hangs like an heavy burden upon the hands of some, especially of younger men; and is at the service of every one, that pleases to take it off. The common effect of which is, that lewd and idle creatures end just as they began; and others, not altogether so bad, hope to retrieve *their* case, but not with much better success. Before the night of death arrives, there is often (not always) an evening, and a twilight, that comes and shuts up the day upon us gradually, and with some warning. This is the time of old age, or our last sickness: and this is the season that abundance trust to, wherein to make their peace with

God, and to finish the work of life. But what an offering do these deluded hearts present to their Creator and Saviour! A work and a service of faculties decayed, worn out, exhausted: with no spirit, no life left in them: a service built upon no higher principle than mere fear, arising from an evil conscience. A parting with our lusts, because all relish of those lusts has forsaken us. This is a time, when you are deprived of your sins; they are absolutely taken from you; you cannot be said to "break them off by repentance." For repentance is a work of the soul, labouring with vigor, acting against temptation, and conquering by a generous sense of reason and duty. But in decrepid age, you will find enough to do otherwise; you will have enough to do to bear the common infirmities and decays of nature, with temper and decency; without peevishness, repining and discontent. *Virtue* must be the work of a sound heart, of an whole and unfettered mind. The time of a last and short sickness, is still far worse, and less promising of any success. For what has this languishing creature to offer to his Lord, in lieu of all the happy opportunities, of all the bright days,

days, and the talents he has lavished away? Why, a little dead-hearted sorrow; frightful fears; sad expectations; and resolutions, that have no prospect of ever being brought to a trial, whether they be good or no. Such an offering, as the prophet Malachi speaks of; the lame, and the blind! “If ye offer the
 “blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if
 “ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?
 “Offer it now unto thy governor: will he
 “be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?”
 For infinitely more vain, and infinitely more offensive, than such a sacrifice would be at the altar, are the prayers and vows of a wicked man at the hour of death. Let me conclude then with the advice of the prophet Jeremiah: “Give glory to the Lord your God,
 “before he cause darkness, and before your
 “feet stumble upon the dark mountains; and
 “while ye look for light, he turn it into the
 “shadow of death.” Or if, perhaps, the warning of a greater prophet, even of that Saviour and Lawgiver whose example I have been urging upon you;---if *this* will have greater force with you, take it in his own words, and lay it to heart: “Yet a little while
 “is the light with you; walk in the light,
 “while

"while ye have the light; lest darkness come
upon you,"

S E R M O N I V.

NUMBERS xxiii. 10.

*Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my
last end be like his.*

IT will give some weight to these words, and to the reflections I purpose to make upon what is contained in them, if we consider the man by whom, and the occasion upon which, they were spoken. This pious wish was put up by Balaam, a man “who loved the wages of unrighteousness.” St. Peter calls him a “prophet.” He appears to have been a person of great abilities and knowledge; had an acquaintance with the true God; and, in all probability, had been employed by him formerly, for the good instruction of the people of the heathen country he lived in. But the sordid love of gain, and views of worldly preferment, at length

eclipsed all his good qualities; and a present temptation discovered the corruption of his inward principles. While he knew the God of Israel, he yet lets himself out to an idolatrous king, as an inchanter, to draw down curses on the worshippers of that God. And though he was honoured by God Almighty with a special command to the contrary, and durst not openly disobey that command; yet, to keep up his interest with king Balak, he would fain *seem* to oblige him---he tried, and bartered, and did all he could. And though God was pleased to make use of his mouth, to utter great blessings, and signal events, relating to the Israelite people; it might perhaps convince the man, but it did not convert him. He was indeed a true prophet in what he said; but he still went on in sinful life, against the God that inspired him. (See chap. xxxi, ver 16.)

What is most remarkable to our present purpose is, that while his thoughts were warm with the sense of the true God, and of the blessings of living and dying in his divine favour; his passion for the present world cooled, and his right reason drew from him this pathetic expression; "Let me die

Let me die

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"the

“ the death of the righteous, and let my last
 “ end be like his.” Wherein you may ob-
 serve,

I. An important and certain truth; that
 the final end of a truly religious man, is the
 happiest and most desirable that can be.

II. Here is a plain confession of this truth,
 even by a wicked man himself, in his serious
 and best state of mind.

III. Hence we may reflect upon the folly,
 and inconsistency of a vitious life; as being
 opposite to the real and last desires of the
 very people that lead it.

I. First then; let us observe this great and
 universal truth; ‘ the conclusion of the life
 ‘ of righteous men, so happy and desirable.’

When Balaam in this place mentions the
 “ righteous,” he means the whole nation of
 Israel, as the peculiar people and worshippers
 of the true God. It was them, in general,
 he speaks of in the ninth verse: “ From the
 “ tops of the rocks I see him; from the hills
 “ I behold him---the people that shall dwell
 “ alone, and not be reckoned among the o-
 “ ther nations.” This was their singular
 and highest felicity; to live under the know-
 ledge of the one God, the creator of

the world; to be delivered from idolatry, and enjoy the means of his true worship; to be protected by his divine and especial providence, guided and enlightened by his law, and blest with his favour. And thus while this worldly minded man was courting preferment in an idolatrous country, and making all his fawning addresses to get posts of honour among a people that lived in ignorance, vice, and superstition; yet his own reasoning heart told him, what a more happy thing it would be for him, to live and die in that community of men, among whom true religion was known; who were the care and inheritance of the infinite Lord of all, and were graced with the titles of the "holy," or the "righteous nation"—the "people of God." A clear and evident truth in this general sense! Of all the blessings a man can be supposed to have, of all the comforts which life can afford him, none are to compare with that of the knowledge of his Maker; of freedom from ignorance and superstition; and the advantages of living in, and leaving the world, with a conscience of truth, piety, and integrity. And this, which is so valuable a condition of a people or a nation

nation at large, is equally so, in every point, with respect to each particular good man. For as his conduct in life is agreeable to the nature and reason of things, and conformable to the laws of the great author of nature; and as his virtues are an imitation of the supreme pattern of all reason and perfection; so it is impossible but that the death of such a person must have every circumstance in it, adequate to the course of his actions; all terminating in honour to his character, comfort to his friends, and peace within himself. First, I say, an honourable character is the natural concomitant of a righteous man's death. I call it only the *natural* attendant; because sometimes, by accidents, or unusual violences, the praises due to virtue may be smothered and eclipsed in the present state of things. And it is possible that some very brave men may never shine here below, in their merited lustre. But, let this be as it will; in the general, mankind is not so abandoned and ill-natured a creature, as to stifle all distinction of right and wrong, good and evil; and all inward veneration for those excellencies, which they will not perhaps be brought to practise. Even the lewder part of
sinners

sinners often retain a secret reverence, which they do not care to own. And though malice, and jarring interests, and the corruption of times, will frequently deprive the life of a good person of its deserved applause; yet when he goes off the stage, these causes are removed: there are few men, whose passions will pursue an adversary beyond the grave! Our resentments mostly sleep along with him: and he whom we hated, because his superior goodness was a disgrace to us, while he stood near us; will now be looked upon in a different light; and his good qualities will be thought of, even by his enemies, without envy, and receive their just acknowledgments without fear or regret. How much dearer will the remembrance of him be to all that have a sense of goodness, and a taste for the virtues he was master of! All they that loved and admired, and were edified by him while he lived, will embalm his memory now he is gone; make him live after he is dead, and speak after he has been long buried in silence. Therefore,

2. The next happy circumstance of a righteous man's death, is the comfort which the review of his past life gives to his friends.

Some

Some of the relations in which we are here tied together, are so close, that it is scarcely possible for us to be parted, without such concern of mind, and passion of heart, as strike hard upon the tenderest part of our human nature. And when not only a nearness of blood, but agreeable and engaging qualities, have rendered us peculiarly dear to each other; whenever death comes to make the cruel separation, we are ready to cry out with David upon his son, and his friend—
“Oh, Absalom, my son! would God I
“had died for thee! Oh, Jonathan, how
“dear wast thou to me!” What remedy then is there in such a case, what balsam for such a wound, like the piety and goodness of the person that is taken from us? The remembrance of *these* will throw comfort upon every situation, wherein we can view the lost object. If he lived under the pressure, or in the prospect, of misfortunes; what a joy is it, that so good a soul should be taken away from the evil to come! Or, if he flourished in all the height of prosperity; it will solace us to reflect, that he is gone off, without the contagion which worldly pleasures so often leave in weak minds; and that he
died

died worthy of the good things he had enjoyed! A man must make but a poor figure in life, if it can be said of him "that nobody wants him, when he dies." But let a friend be never so amiable, never so valuable to us; there is nothing that can raise our hearts, or silence our griefs, for the loss of him, so soon as the thought and assurance that he died well. The advantage he has gained by the exchange, will call upon us, not to magnify the loss we have sustained: and the very blessings he reaps in death, will remain an article in the pleasure and comfort of our own lives.

no 3. The last particular to be mentioned, relates wholly to the righteous man himself; and that is, 'the unspeakable serenity of mind, and joyful prospect, with which he leaves the world.' There is so strong a connection between our two constituent parts of soul and body, that we can but seldom have their dissolution from each other, without those pangs, and struggles of nature, that are entailed upon this frail and mortal state. Diseases will have their course, both upon the righteous and the wicked. But as the impressions of the body affect the mind with
pain;

pain; so it is certain, the temper and thoughts of the mind have a noble influence towards alleviating the pains of the body, and giving them intervals of ease and comfort. Solid hope, and peaceful conscience; freedom from terrible guilt, and all affrightning fear of what is to come;--is a medicine that will soften any wound, though it cannot quite cure, and close it up. The man that is able to look backward, without reproaches upon himself; and forward, with hope and assurance in the nature of things, and in the just and merciful Providence of the God of nature---has a cordial, that no other person can taste of: he can look the great enemy in the face, and safely say, "the bitterness of death is past."

To finish this head---Which now of the foregoing happy circumstances can be said to attend the last exit of a wicked man, of a debauchee, or of an oppressor? The little vain applause, which such men receive, is the mere effect of interest, or humour. The wise and the virtuous can never commend them, though they may speak charitably of them. And when once they are gone, their lewd companions will be the very first that will drop their character, and the forwardest to throw

throw dirt upon their name. To their friends they leave no comfort; and the greatest kindness *they* can do their memory, is to try to bury it in silence, and in darkness. And to themselves they have nothing left, but a terror of conscience, if they have any conscience remaining; or else, if they have quite worn it all out, the effect of a stupid and a depraved mind.

II. It is now time for us to take this argument in a second view; namely, 'as it is a plain confession from the mouth of the sinner himself, in his serious hour, and better state of mind:' "let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." Nor is this the confession and desire of a particular man only; it is the voice of *people* and *nations*. The Jews, in the times of their highest immoralities, had a prayer that was in every one's mouth; "let my soul rest in Abraham's bosom!" They that had so little of Abraham's faith, and still less of his works, in one life, were glad to take their portion with him in another. Indeed it cannot but be the same, with the heart of every other person, who has any concern at all about his present conduct, or his
future

future state : and where there is no concern about *either*, *there* is no room for argument! No doubt there are such people, as the scriptures tell you of; “the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.” But the wilful blindness of such as will neither see nor hear, is no objection to the use of eyes and ears. So, I say, where any understanding takes place, and there are any returns of consideration, compunction and remorse will inevitably follow. There is not a vicious man in a thousand; but has in him the common unquenchable desire to have his being continued to him, and harbours an aversion to the thought of sinking into nothing, and existing no more. Men would never feast and riot upon life, if they did not think it worth the owning, and did not wish to have it prolonged. They, again, cannot avoid seeing the state they are placed in; what relations they stand in, and what duties are required of them, as men, and social creatures : and, even while their ungoverned passions determine them to vice, their consciences are pleading the cause of virtue and sobriety. And when, at last, they find they are going to tread a new stage; if it were re-
ferred

ferred to themselves what company they would choose to be joined with; we might safely venture the cause upon it, that whereas they would hardly condescend to look upon a good man in their hurry of pleasures in this life; they would pay him the compliment of wishing they might attend him into the other world. By all this then, here is a manifest concession of the two grand points; first, "that a future life is a matter of natural expectation, and of great probability; and, secondly, that it is of the utmost consequence to be provided for." A thing that will ever be the object of men's highest and last wishes, must of necessity be the highest and the greatest thing.

In fine; if in rational creatures, religion and conscience, with all moral sense of good and evil, could possibly be set aside; *interest* would still put in her claim: and it is allowed on all hands, that to live by the rules of piety, justice, and temperance, is the certain way to be safe: it is the most prudent at least, if it were not the most pleasant path; and wickedness is the high road not only to future, but even (as these men know by sad experience) to *present* misery.

III. There-

III. Therefore the unavoidable, though unpleasing reflection is; the folly and inconsistency of a profligate life; as being opposite to all the best and most dispassionate desires of the very man that leads it. Whenever this person compares his conduct with the dictates of his reason, and lays together the beginning, progress, and conclusion of his life; what an incoherent creature does he find himself! St. Paul, in the seventh chapter of his epistle to the Romans, the better to draw this picture, imagines *himself* to be this sort of man; and, in the fifteenth and following verses, brings him in, thus speaking to himself: that which I do---when swayed by my habitual passions---“I allow not”---when my reason takes place: “but what I hate, that I do.” The good that I would---that my judgment approves---“I do not; but the evil which I would not”---should never choose, if I considered rightly---“that I do. I delight in the law of God, after the inward man”---in my cool and real sentiments; “but I see another law in my members”---an habit of lust, as strong as a second nature---“warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into

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"captivity to the law of sin, and so of death. "Oh, wretched man that I am!" as the following words justly conclude. Here is a man that plainly sees two ways before him; knows whither each of them leads to; looks into two worlds; finds the one to be of short duration; the other he can see no end of. And yet, while he owns it the universal rule of prudence, to be most solicitous about that which is of the greatest importance, and will last the longest; he grasps at the moment, and takes no care of the eternity! No set of men will act thus in other, and infinitely inferior concerns. The usurer, who knows the best returns for his money, will never dispense that money at the lowest interest. The seaman, who understands the use of the compass, will not in a freak run contrary to his course: much less will he steer his vessel upon a rock. Nor yet the husbandman, that sees the beauties of the spring, and the revolutions of the sun and the seasons, will ever sow his corn in the dead of winter. There is surely therefore a mystery in iniquity, beyond all mysteries! It is the most unaccountable mixture of rashness and cowardice: and whatever be the motives that urge men to
sin,

sin, it will bear to be defended upon no scheme whatever. They that follow the evil principles, would gladly get rid of the consequences; and they that seem so intrepid amidst the thoughtless scenes of vice, feel very differently when they come to die! When a lewd man has all along been playing the fool, he would fain take his last seat among the wise. His life has been spent in nothing, but in heaping up matter for repentance. He has acted upon maxims which at last he dreads to own, but finds it too late to lay aside. The happiness he has never thought of, he would now willingly enjoy: the heaven he is quite unprepared for, he would give the world to be admitted into. And whereas his wit and his ridicule was all he could formerly bestow upon the pious and humble Christian, now they are taking leave of the world together, who is esteemed, who is wise and blessed, but HE? And thus he closes a life of folly, with a wish and a prayer of mere vanity; "let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

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S E R M O N V.

ROMANS xiv. 10.

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

THOUGH the grand object of religion be, to moderate the passions, and sweeten the tempers of mankind; to bring them to peace and love, and so to happiness, one with another; yet the best of all religions, the Gospel of Peace itself, was no sooner delivered to the world, but the very professors of it made it a matter of dispute and contention. Many of the first Christians, having been converted from other religions, in which they were brought up, and had all along lived; were apt to retain a fondness for their old principles, and would fain have mixed them

them with new ones: while others were *as* apt to despise their brethren that did so, as weak and ridiculous believers. Hence arose misunderstandings, and hard censures; not always about things of real importance, or essential piety; but (what much oftener happens) about ceremonies, and some externals or other; about circumcision, or festival days, or meats and drinks, and the like. It is highly worth your observation, what a prudent method St. Paul took, in this, and all his Epistles; with what a tender hand he manages this spirit of discord and censoriousness. His way was, not immediately to strike in with any side (unless in very plain cases) nor absolutely to vindicate one against the other; but to remind them all of that common Christian obligation, that ought to keep them in charity, and mutual good-nature. "One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. One believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs." He did not abolish their days, nor their meats: But, says he, "let not him that eateth, despise him that eateth not." He recommends to them the things they all agreed

greed in; the great virtues, without which none could be saved. And in the cases he had handled in this epistle, his argument was, not, 'Why do ye *think differently* one from another?' but, 'Why do ye treat each other's different opinions with *severity* and *contempt*?' "Why dost thou *judge* thy brother? or, Why dost thou set at nought thy brother? since we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

The text then, you see, leads me to remark,

I. The disagreeable qualities, and mischievous effects, of a censorious temper.

II. The several arguments that should dissuade men from it: And,

III. and particular, The argument *here* drawn from the certainty of a future and universal judgment of God.

First then: From the occasion upon which this, and abundant other passages of holy scripture were spoken, and from the reason of the thing itself, it plainly appears, that we are not debarred passing *all kinds* of judgment and censure upon the actions and conduct of each other. There are innumerable instances, wherein we cannot avoid this or

that way of judging, if we would, Some actions are as clear to the moral understanding, as light and colours are to the natural eye: we *must* see them as they are, and can give them no other than their own names. Thus, open blasphemy and profaness, impudent debaucheries, flagrant villainy and oppression, ought to have no compliments passed upon them: they have no right to be covered over with smooth words, or soft language: the practisers of them must have their proper titles. The example of our blessed and most charitable Lord, bears us out here; his own Apostles give us the warrant. He himself called some men "hypocrites," and a "generation of vipers;" and *they* pronounced some wicked livers to be such, "whose damnation is just;" and their crimes such, as that "they who do such things, shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Only we must be exceedingly cautious how we make use of these precedents; and must remember, that Christ knew the heart, before he branded the man; whereas *we* can very often judge only by appearances. Uncharitable and unchristian censures therefore, are those that are passed upon things not clear

and

and evident: Where the nature, end, and circumstances of the actions we condemn, are uncertain, and liable to mistake; where, in short, the judgment is given without sufficient information, just enquiry, and warrantable grounds. And this, how frequently may it be the case! We may see a thing come from a man, and yet know very little of the *motives* from whence it proceeds; and oftentimes there is an ill face, where there may be no bad or malicious heart.

To proceed now---Rash judgment is passed upon one another, either with respect to religious principles and opinions, or with respect to our general conduct in common and social life.

I. In the former of these, men are guilty of this vice, when, through careless ignorance, hasty prejudice, or false zeal, they misapprehend themselves, and would impose upon others, things for necessary and indispensable points of religion, which really are not so; and then grow stiff and severe upon all who will not bend, or even force their understandings into a compliance with *their* determinations. Or when they look upon the *real* errors and mistakes of their brethren

with

with a cruel eye; without making allowance for the innocent prejudices, and almost inevitable causes, that may have led them into such errors. For, though all men have indeed the same rule; and, in the main, the same common understanding to learn and to know that rule; yet the *application* of the understanding to the rule, does often depend upon so many foreign and accidental circumstances, that as no man should be over confident for himself, so the very condition of human life calls upon him to judge favourably of all others. The different modes and habits of thinking, we insensibly fall into, from education, from reading, from authority and example; what will not these do, towards fixing the mind in sentiments that may perhaps be wrong, but yet are hard to be parted with; where still the foundation, and real intention, may be honesty, and a love of truth? In all these cases, God, the framer of all hearts, and the author of the great law that is to direct them, should be our example. *He* is an impartial judge, and weighs all causes in the balance of equity and mercy. Man, who ought to know his own infirmities best, and to be the most tender, is the only judge

judge that is unequal! What a melancholy history is the whole Christian church of this misconduct! The Apostles had their hands full employed in suppressing this diabolical principle. The epistles of the New Testament abound with complaints of it, and with the warmest admonitions against it. When the Apostles were gone off the stage, pride and contention reigned all over the Eastern church; until God, in just judgment, suffered the impostor Mahomet to prevail over them all; until St. John's threatening was fulfilled upon them, and Christ "removed "the candlestick" (the blessed light of the Gospel) "from them." The same vice too began the ruin of the churches in our Western parts of the world. The Bishops, and rulers of those churches, met together in bodies, not so much to confirm the old and true doctrines, as to establish and impose new and uncertain ones. And when once they had got preferments annexed to their opinions, and temporal power to back their zeal, they *then* soon proceeded to censure, condemn, persecute, and abuse one another, as if Christ had never been their common Saviour, nor God the father of them all! So it was, that

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in one and the same age, began the superstition of Mahomet in one part of the world, and that of Popery in the other: and the completion of *Popery*, was the destruction of all good temper, and Christian charity: for then Christians were judged and condemned by wholesale; not for their vices, but for their understandings.

2. This rash judgment, with respect to our conduct in the moral and social life, branches out into a variety of articles. It will be sufficient, to specify a few heads of it. We are guilty of it, whenever we take the dubious, or suspected actions of our neighbour, by the worst handle; and put the hardest construction, where a more favourable one ought to take place. By which perverse and iniquitous rule of judging, things the most innocent, and even the most laudable, may be liable to censure; and a good man be thrown into as bad a character, as the worst of all. Hospitality shall be called vain-glory; and careful industry be blackened as covetousness. Modesty and reservedness shall want only a little of this vile temper, to get it stiled moroseness of spirit; and a serious gravity shall be named hypocrisy.

Again;

Again; we offend in this matter, when we are too hasty to believe, especially when we are forward to spread, any ill report of another. It is ever a mark of goodness, to wish others as virtuous as ourselves; and the next good step from wishing it, is to believe it of them. It is no small matter for any man to be guilty; and therefore it is no small unkindness, without great reason, to think him so. Reputation is the nicest thing in the world; riches can never purchase it; the gold of Ophir is not to be weighed against it. What a cruelty is it then, to let it suffer by common and busy tongues! Even a bad action is not always fit to be divulged: things are seldom made better, but often much worse, by going through many hands; and they that are forward to spread all that is true, will be in great danger of taking along with it many things that are false; and, if they cannot find a false addition to a report, they will be very apt to make one.

Once more; to magnify any real piece of misconduct, is another instance of this evil disposition. Vice is of a complexion black enough: it wants no help of the envious hand, or of the bitter tongue, to set it off;
it

it carries in it a load of shame and reproach : it were a pity to add to it ! it were cruelty to increase it !

Finally ; all these articles of uncharitable judging, will be aggravated in the sin of them, whenever men suffer their hard sentiments to proceed to words and actions of scornful and contemptuous behaviour ; when our looks, our eyes, our gestures, speak contempt and disesteem. Too many parts of your neighbour's conduct may deserve your blame, or your pity ; but hatred and scorn are like *pride*, which the wise man tells us was not made for *man*, nor furious anger for them that are born of a woman.

II. The several branches of the sin before us, being thus briefly recited ; let us, in the next place, observe the arguments, that ought to dissuade us from it.

Now there are various considerations, arising from the common relation we bear to each other as a set of frail and sinful creatures ; which, if duly attended to, would greatly help to curb this unsocial and virulent spirit. For, first, how ill qualified are we to judge the hearts, to measure out the crimes, or to determine the state of one another !

A judge

A judge is an open usurper of authority, unless he can shew a commission, that impowers him to pass sentence, and gives a sanction to what he does. From whence then, or from whom, does the severe censurer derive *his* authority? Nature has given no one person the least right over another in this matter: Providence has drawn a dark veil over every conscience; and no eye, beside its own, is able to see through it: Revelation is full of testimonies, that God alone is its judge, because he only knows it.

Again; every judge ought, as far as possible, to be well and intimately acquainted with all the circumstances of the case he is about to determine. Whereas how often, how almost *always*, do *we* know little more than the bare outside of a neighbour's conduct: the inward springs are all a secret to us! We hear one side (perhaps not above half that one side) and never stay for the other, that might give a balance to a great part, if not to the whole of it.

Moreover; of all persons in the world, a judge of men should be impartial, dispassionate, and clear of prejudices; but, especially, he ought to be himself innocent of the crimes

he

he condemns. If there be a man amongst us, that can safely say, he has cleansed his own heart of all these infirmities, and washed his own hands in perfect innocency; let him come forth, and mount the seat of judgment: but till then, let him turn his eye inward upon himself; and, from a view of his own imperfections, learn to compassionate the failings of others. For surely, for any one to cast stones at the guilty, with his own numerous sins about him (the thing so daily practised, by the most worthless of our species!) must be to double the judgment he would give upon his own head. In every hard censure we pass upon another man, there is something extremely ungenerous and unjust; namely, a total forgetfulness of ourselves, and of our own faults; or, which is still far worse, a base design to screen our own vices, by holding forth those of our neighbour. It is but a just debt due to every man, to be as well esteemed as his character will bear: and there is no friendship, no peace to be kept up in the world, if men do not think as they would be glad to be thought of, as well as do as they would be done by. For indeed there is frequently as much wrong committed

committed by a disreputable and unworthy esteem, as by an injurious action.

III. But the last thing to be considered, will give strength, and infinite weight, to these, and all other general arguments; viz. the Apostle's particular one, here in the text, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of *Christ*." This, in the scripture, is always urged as a motive to tenderness of spirit, and calmness of censure upon each other. "There is one lawgiver," says St. James, "who is able to save, and to destroy: Who art *thou*, that judgest another?" Of every man, says St. Paul, in this very chapter, "to his own master he standeth, or falleth." Whoever then be the person, or whatever the action, that appears so criminal in your eyes; remember, first, that the man has another master, another lawgiver, another judge, who has the sole right to pass sentence upon him: and what guilt do *you* incur, if you usurp that right! Then consider the qualifications of that celestial judge, and the nature of the judgment he will give; and try if these will not afford you full satisfaction in every point, wherein you are guided by reason, and not by passion. For instance: Would you have

justice done to yourself, and upon the offender? And can you fail of it, when the man is to stand before that Christ, from whose boundless knowledge no secret can be hid; from whose all-seeing eye nothing can cover the innocence, or the guilt, of *him*, or of yourself; by whose perfect wisdom and justice, all righteousness shall be cleared up, and all iniquity confounded; and from whose unerring sentence, no artifice, no friends, no false colours, will be the least defence! Or do you censure a man, in order to have *wickedness exposed*? That may sometimes do good; and perhaps sometimes harm: it will always do harm, if your censure should be wrong, or malicious. But you will surely think it the less needful, when you reflect, that your "Lord will come with ten thousands of his "saints;" and the man, whom you are endeavouring to expose to a few mortal *men*, will be laid open to the face of men and angels! Or if it is your *anger* that wants a vent; what occasion for it, when you know there is a fiery trial coming; wherein will be executed indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man, that has done either *you*, or any one else, an unrepented evil?

Finally;

Finally; to all these, and many more particulars of the like kind, let me add a yet more interesting part of the scripture argument, from the universal judgment; and that is, ‘that our present hasty censures upon our *brethren*, will *then* be turned upon *ourselves*.’ It is a gospel condition of *our* being mercifully treated *then*, that *we* think of, and treat each other with mercy *now*. For God’s sake, has not every one of us, even the very best of us, enough to judge his own heart for? Let us not, then, heap up the load, but lighten it as much as we can! If any thing will do this, it is candour and good-nature that will: and they who cast off *that*, will find these words a heavy truth upon them; “With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to *you* again.” For he that in his sentiments “hath shewed no mercy, shall have judgment without mercy.”

To God, only wise, &c.

[85]

S E R M O N VI.

PROVERBS xxii. 2.

*The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord
is the maker of them all.*

THERE are several ways of teaching men the morals and duties of life. One of them, is that of short maxims, or proverbs: another, is that of regular, methodical, and argumentative discourse. The latter of these is the more modern; the former was the ancient, and a good old way it was! When men of wisdom and learning happened upon any thing, in the course of their observations, that might tend to improve and civilize human life; they immediately reduced it into a proverb, or short lesson; that it might thereby be the more easily learned and remembered. Solomon, the divine philosopher, followed this early custom, in this incompara-

ble book of morals; wherein you may remark two different kinds of these instructive lessons: some, in the form of a precept; as, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart: keep thy heart with all diligence: get wisdom: forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding." Others consist of brief sentences or propositions, containing, in a small compass, some fundamental and important truth, upon which many other excellent truths may be formed, and be drawn from it: as, "The merciful man doth good to his own soul: he that walketh uprightly, walketh surely: the fear of the Lord prolongeth days; but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." Of this latter sort are the words of the text; "The rich and the poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all."

My present design is,

I. To shew you the meaning of each part of this sentence; and to illustrate the truth of it by proper instances.

II. To point out to you such practical doctrines, as it was intended to convey to us; and which every serious man, especially every Christian, ought to learn from it.

I. The

I. The expression of the "rich and poor meeting together," is understood to signify their equality of condition, their being upon the level with each other;---I mean, in some principal and material considerations, not in all circumstances; Almighty God having, for the best and wisest ends of his divine government, appointed, in this present world, different and various degrees in the estates of mankind: that some should be rich, great, and powerful; while others are inferior, and more visibly dependent---some to rule, and the rest to obey. But still there are many instances, the main and grand articles, the most interesting and weighty concerns, wherein they all "meet together," are all equally favoured, and have all equal privileges. As,

1. We all agree in one common nature; and in all original advantages of constitution, whether of body, or of mind. The beauty, health, and strength of our bodies, appears in all so promiscuous a blessing, as to prevent every suspicion of partiality, in those gifts of God and Nature. No difference can you find, but what is procured by the external arts of dress, and mere outward ornaments. It is not the prerogative of the greatest

prince that lives, to have a limb, a joint, a vein, a nerve, or a muscle, finer, or more curious, than is to be seen in the meanest subject he has. Neither birth, nor titles, can give a fine form to the person, nor mend the shape, nor brighten the face! It is exactly the same, with the better and the nobler part of man. The same rational and immortal spirit inhabits all alike: the same natural faculties, towards accomplishing us for our several proportions of happiness, are bestowed with an even hand of goodness and power. Poverty needs not, *ought* not, to lessen our virtue: and that wealth and those honours, which might indeed, and *should* help to raise and improve it, are too often found to be the means of debasing and spoiling it. In short, every man has his duty, and his rule: and the subject is as free an agent, as his lord and superior.

2. Again; all ranks of men "meet together," with respect to the watchful and paternal care, which God exercises over them. The same gracious Being, who at first made and created us, still continually preserves, protects, and provides for us. And though there are *some* relations, wherein a difference
must

must be kept up, in human life; yet the general providential blessings are kindly and impartially dispersed amongst us. The same sun and rain, and fruitful seasons, fill the hearts of us all with food and gladness. Some bounties, it is true, are showered down in larger portions, upon particular persons: but then others usually have it made up to *them*, in something else. Great ones have the authority, and the government: but then the lesser ones are free from the troubles and vexations of it, and enjoy the comforts of quiet and repose. Princes and magistrates may be supposed to have a peculiar eye of Providence over *them*. But this ought not to be mistaken: it is not over their persons, but over their office: not merely because they are richer, or more exalted, than the rest; but because they have a greater burden of care upon them; a nobler train of duties to perform, for the good of their fellow-creatures, and for the glory of God in the government of the world. So far therefore as they are of more signal consequence, so far have they a weightier charge of conscience, and a larger account to render up to the supreme Lord of all.

3. Farther;

3. Farther; we are all upon a level, in another essential point; viz. in a mutual and incessant dependence upon each other, in all the business, and for all the pleasures, of the present life. Each equally wants the other's good offices, and could not possibly subsist without them. As much beholden as the labourer is to his master, for his employment, and his wages; so much is the master to *him* for his labour. What the author of my text tells us, in another place, is everlastingly true, in all times and countries: "The king *"himself,"* says he, "is served by the plough." The great Governor of the World hath so wisely mixed us together, as to make us all contribute and conspire to the happiness of whole. The lower sort live by the higher: and the highest of all might starve in the midst of plenty, without the useful hands of those beneath them. The delicacies and elegancies of life are enjoyed by the rich, but they are wrought and manufactured by the poor. Poverty is what a wise and virtuous person may always support himself under, with tolerable satisfaction; but, without the ingenuity and industry of the man that "earns *"his bread,"* the magistrate and his train
could

could never shine, the crown and sceptre itself could make no figure.

4. Once more; we are all, most especially, in an equal condition, with regard to the frail state of our present being, and the very short and uncertain period of it. Many may be elevated above their brethren; but none of us knows, how *long* he may be so! Riches and honours have no deed of settlement from Heaven; nor is want, and mean estate, entailed on any person, or any family. Uncertainty is the inseparable quality of the things of this life: and equally are we in the dark, as to the end and conclusion of it. But, whatever differences and distinctions may prevail *here*, in our present circumstances; there is one thing, of which we are all certain; and wherein we are all sure to “meet together;” namely, that after a few years, we shall all be cut off by the same hand of death: our power and our dependency, our grandeur and our poverty, will be laid together in the dust; out of which we were all at first formed and taken.

5. Lastly then; let us now imagine ourselves all raised from the grave together, and met once more, to reap the fruits, and receive

ceive the recompence, of our present conduct, at the last and great trial. *There* we shall find God to be *indeed* the "maker of "us all;" that is, the righteous governor, judge and rewarder, of all whom he has made. There the present relations, of high and low, rich and poor, prince and subject, lord and vassal, shall finally cease. There, when every one comes to be weighed, nothing shall be put into his scale, but moral goodness, intrinsic worth, and a discharge of the duties of his peculiar station, agreeably to the laws of God, and the terms of Christ's Gospel. There family and fortune, the post of honour and of power, will have no other consideration, than that of the *good* a man has done with those great talents, to his people, to his country, and to the religion of his God and Saviour. And all the subjection, and inferiority of the rest of mankind, will be looked upon no farther, than either to reward the obedience, contentment, submission, and industry of some, or to punish the discontent and rebellion of others, under the all-wise dispensation of the Divine Providence: that so, every man may be dealt with according to his work.

II. Thus

II. Thus have I given you, in as concise a manner as I could, the full sense of this divine proverb. Let us now consider, to what good uses the author might intend we should apply it, in the moral and practical life. The proverb itself, and all that I have said upon it, makes it natural for me to point my reflections to the two sorts of persons, of which the world, in the general, is composed; the great and the small, the governors and the governed. And,

1st. If God Almighty be thus universally bountiful, and hath made so little difference, as to the greater instances of his Providence, and graces towards us; this should caution *us* to make none but a just difference, and not too high distinctions, in *our* conduct towards each other. I say none but *just* and *proper* distinctions: for such we see a plain foundation laid for, by the Almighty himself, in the course of things, and in his own divine word. Every man has a claim to an outward respect, suitable to his external quality, condition, and rank in life. And they, who would derogate from the reverence that is due to their superiors; or who take the least pains to damp and abate it in the minds
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of others; are the enemies of society, the authors of confusion, and of every evil work. The care, therefore, recommended to you from our present subject, is only this; that you do not measure *all* your regard, and esteem of one another, by the mere outward shew, and figure of life: that your difference of fortune, or situation, does not so transport you, as to cause you to look down with an aspect of contempt, upon those that are beneath you, or are subject to your influence or power: forgetting, or overlooking, the common nature, the divine image, in which *they* as well as *you* were originally made, and the same good God that created you both. This would be to make a distinction, when the sovereign Creator has made none. This is human weakness indeed;---to value ourselves for *that*, which is not our own! For such are riches, and all the transient glories of this world: they are absolutely not our own possessions: it is not our own mere ability, that can either attain them at first, or secure them to us for an hour when we have them! A wise and a good man therefore, will treat every one as a *partner*, in his human, rational, and social capacity: he will remember, in
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how many superior blessings and perfections we "all meet;" what useful and valuable qualities may dwell in the meaner person; which may be a balance to what he himself is master of, in his more eminent station: that, if the man has not *his power*, he may have as much integrity, and as much inclination to do good: if he be not so wealthy, or so refined, he may be as wise, as serviceable in his kind, and finally as happy, as himself. And blessed is that great person, and blessed are all they that are about him, or under him; who considers, and truly learns, wherein consists the praise, and real splendor of greatness and plenty! To do justice with a mind impartial and indifferent, fills that same mind with the delightful sense of its own dignity, greatness, and worth: and to inflict even punishment itself, with some symptoms and expressions of concern, tenderness, and compassion towards the offender, shews a generous affection and regard for the whole human nature.

In fine; humility, condescension and charity, in a high station, is a truly politic, as well as a divine virtue. It is this that sweetens the toil of the labouring man; lifts up
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the heart of him that is in want, or depends upon us; renders government easy, and obedience peaceable and chearful. He that would have the truth, as well as the formality, of respect and reverence; must look downward while he sits above, and learn to be humble while he is great.

2. The next lesson this proverb was designed to teach us, will of course be directed to the *subject* part of mankind. Never let submission to them that are set over you, be esteemed a mean, or a degrading thing; nor the condition of a subject be thought the least reflection upon the goodness of the Divine Being, or to bespeak the least degree of injustice in his dealings with us. This would be to reflect upon the beauty and felicity even of Heaven itself. A well-ordered and peaceful kingdom upon *earth*, bears a resemblance to the all-perfect kingdom *above*. For in those celestial realms, beyond all controversy, is government, rule, and order: *there* superiority and subordination constitute the glory and wisdom, and a joyful obedience and contentment fills up the happiness, of that blessed society. Those good angels, "who kept
" their first estate," and thankfully behaved
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in their original posts, grew in virtue, and were raised in felicity: they that, through ambition and discontent, forsook it, “were thrust down; and are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day!”

3. But the doctrine, that most wants to be pressed upon the hearts of men from the present argument, respects the still lower and poorer sort amongst us. For as, in affluence and power, the mind is apt to swell, and to grow imperious; so, in poverty and mean circumstances, it is *as* prone to become sordid, careless, and thoughtless. Your condition, too often, debases your spirits; so that you have no ambition to merit the praises, that ought to belong to you. Little knowledge, little behaviour, little religion, you think, may serve *your* turn! But you would never judge thus, if you would only reflect, *who* it is that has appointed this difference between *you* and the people you so much envy; what the difference really is, and in what things it consists;---in things the most fleeting and vain, not in the great substantials of virtue and eternal happiness! You have the same God to worship; the same Saviour

to hope in; the same rewards to animate you to what is laudable, and the same punishments to restrain you from whatever is base and iniquitous. And the services required in your humbler stations, are as worthy in themselves, and as necessary toward the glory of the kingdom of God, as those of the highest class of men. Does not St. Paul therefore assure you, in his epistle to Titus, that, however meanly you may think of yourselves, you have it in your power "to *adorn* the doctrine of God your Saviour in "all things?" And does not St. James likewise tell you, to your inexpressible comfort and encouragement, that the poor, the *good* poor, may be "rich in faith, and heirs of "the kingdom, which God hath promised to "them that love him?" Your want of much learning, may be supplied by many admirable virtues of the *man*, and the great known duties of the Christian. Leave magnificence, bounty, and generosity, to those on whom God has bestowed the proper talents for them. *Your* industry, and modesty, your love of God, and of your neighbour; the sober government of yourselves, and the pious care of your families; will recommend you to the

the divine favour, and qualify you for a degree of felicity, which a thousand sons of shining fortunes may fall short of, and never be able to enjoy.

In a word; never forget what it is you have in common with the wealthiest and the noblest;---that, though your income may be slender, and your advantages little; you may, if you please, carry a *soul* as large as *they*! And if the hand of fortune be somewhat strait to you, the gate of Heaven stands as wide open to *you* as to the best that are alive!

4. And now to conclude;---the few things I have been able to say upon this weighty argument, may be sufficient, I hope, to convince us all, of the indispensable duties of a pious resignation to the will of God, and a conscientious attention to the proper business of our respective callings. Let none of the virtues of the Christian life be wanting: let no man be offended at a distinction for a few days among those fellow-servants, whom Providence designs to bring together again, and to cause them to meet in the joy of that Lord, who is "the maker of them all." May no ignorant impatience deprive any man of low degree, of his share in that joy: and may

there never be found at that great day, any person of superior rank, to whom it shall be said, as it was by Abraham to the rich man in the Gospel: "Remember, son, that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things; and likewise many others, through thy neglect of justice, or want of charity, *their* evil things. But now the case is altered! and the time is come, when they are to be comforted, and thou art to be "tormented."

S E R M O N VII.

MATTHEW ii. 16.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Betlehem, and in all the coasts thereof; from two years old and under.

TO render a passage of this kind the more useful and instructive, it will be proper to look into some circumstances of the time and place, wherein this singular transaction happened.

At and before the time of our Saviour's birth, there prevailed among the Eastern people (as all history assures us) a general opinion and belief concerning some great prince, who was to be born into the world, and to enjoy the rule and empire of it. The Jews looked for such an one in their own nation,

in the person and reign of the *Messiah*, clearly promised and described in their ancient prophecies: and this was the age, in which he was expected to appear. At this time, Herod was the deputy king of Judea, under the Roman emperor; and, according to the too common temptations of such an high office, was time-serving, jealous, and ambitious. He was, doubtless, well acquainted with the current reports, and the expectation that had been raised about the birth of this new and mighty potentate: and, like the rest of the people he now governed, having no idea of a kingdom, but that of a temporal and earthly monarchy; he thought it began to be high time to look about him, and to keep a watchful eye upon one, whom he supposed to be an enemy, and a rival of his power and royalty. Accordingly, though Almighty God had given a miraculous evidence of the birth of Christ; and had sent men from a far distant country, to point out and declare the person of this illustrious prince and Saviour; not convinced by these things (for what conviction can take place in a worldly and ambitious heart) his very first thought and determination was, to get the new-

new-born infant into his hands. But this it was not politic to attempt at first by open violence, but by artifice and stratagem. The Jewish Doctors therefore were sent for; and enquiry was made, in what *place* their prophecies had foretold their Messiah was to be born: and *Bethlehem* was found to be the place. A plain text of scripture was shewn him, to prove it by: "And thou Bethlehem in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel."

The Eastern sages and philosophers, who were come to Jerusalem, in search of the royal babe, and to pay their reverence to him; gave so respectable an account of themselves, and of the heavenly hand which had conducted them thither; that any ill treatment of *them* would have been too palpably scandalous and unwarrantable. So *they* were to be made the instruments, that were to help forward the cruel design. "Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also." When this contrivance failed, and the wife

men were "warned of God in a dream to
"return into their own country another way,"
there was nothing left, but to throw off the
politician, and to resume the tyrant; and to
make sure of one innocent, by commanding
the massacre of every babe that was to be
found "in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts
"thereof, from two years old and under."

I purpose, in what follows,

I. To observe to you, a little more particularly, the views and intentions of this barbarous man.

II. To vindicate the justice and wisdom of the Divine Providence, in permitting such barbarity to take effect. And,

III. To conclude with some suitable and useful reflections.

First then: The emperor at Rome, under whom king Herod enjoyed his government, was one of the most shrewd and politic of men. With *him* therefore he was to ingratiate himself at all events: and to this end, he thought every method must be taken, to cut off all new pretenders to the Jewish kingdom, now tributary to Rome. All the demonstrations he had received of the miraculous birth of Christ, were quickly stifled:

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the grand object was, to keep in favour with Augustus: *his* applause and commendation must be purchased at any rate; though the price of it were the tears and the cries of his own subjects, and the blood of children innocent and spotless. But some writers tell us, that this was not the whole: for that Herod had a point to carry with the *Jews themselves*. He knew they now expected their great prince; and might perhaps be convinced, from their prophecies and inspired writings, that such an expectation was just and well grounded. And if Herod moreover was a *Jew*, or had formed a party among the Jews, who flattered him with a persuasion, that *he himself* was the long looked for king of Israel; and if this party were the *Herodians* you read of in the Gospel;---then, I say, elate and fired with these darling hopes, what would not an artful and an aspiring man endeavour to perpetrate! He would diligently “seek the young child,” under colour of zeal for *Cæsar*; but would make villages and cities run down with guileless blood, in order to accomplish the *real* design, and to become supreme and independent.

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But lastly; whether there be any truth in this supposition, or not; Herod's whole eye and heart were certainly fixed upon securing the dominion he *now* possessed, either as a principal, or a vicegerent. The success of any rival would reduce him to nothing. Were there a new claimant to be set up, though by the Almighty himself; born from Heaven, and attended with all the signs of Heaven; Herod will still be king: and innocence, religion, and truth, shall all die, that a lawless tyrant, in an earthly kingdom, may securely and proudly live.

And here, before we proceed, let us stand a while, and look back upon this dreadful character.

First; to what an enormous and unforeseen degree of wickedness may a vitious mind expose and debase itself! This very Herod, when he was in a lower sphere of life, and perhaps had never dreamed of being made a king; had he then been told (suppose by some prophet) that he should one day mount a throne, but should prove the shame and reproach of all thrones, by the unexampled murder of great numbers of his own harmless and infant subjects, "who could not
" discern

“ discern between their right hand and their
“ left ; ” --- what, think you, would his an-
swer have been ? Certainly no other, than
that of Hazael to the prophet Elifha :
“ What, is thy servant a dog, that he should
“ do this great thing ? ” And yet Hazael did
actually commit the one cruelty, and Herod
the other !

The case is too much the same with us
all ! Whenever you enter into a sinful course
of action, and once begin to violate your con-
science ; you can never know, to what evils
you may arrive, at what crimes you shall
make your stop. Theft, adultery, murder,
all of them generally spring from beginnings
of smaller moment : and yet there is not any
of them, but what, without an early check
of repentance, will ripen the one into the
other, and grow to a terrible size you did not
think of.

Secondly ; let us here again remark, in
particular, what a source of ills, what a foun-
tain of mischiefs, is seated in an *ambitious*
mind, that is enslaved to the love of worldly
interest and grandeur. Herod is not an ex-
ample, that stands single : every age, and al-
most every country, abounds with the like ;
with

with more than enow to be a warning to us all, and teach us to correct the wild excesses of temporal passions, desires, and resentments. *Here* it is, in its worst degrees, that when the government of the *man* is lost, the wild beast breaks loose; falls upon every thing that comes in its way; devours without distinction; and its thirst of blood knows no measure. When God and reason are banished from that mind, to which is joined an hand of power; who is able to calculate the woful effects! Pity and humanity, all sentiments of generosity and tenderness, are exiled along with them: and that ruin is brought forth in a single hour, which the tears and the remorse of an whole age can never recompence, or repair.

Thirdly; you see here, that some of the most shocking and detestable of all sins, are such as are practised under the cloke of loyalty, and the pretence of religion and duty. "Go and search diligently for the young child," says Herod, "and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also:" when the plot, all the time, was to destroy the Lord, whom he feigned to adore. Amazing
stupidity!

stupidity ! that a rational creature should thus abuse the most exalted principle to the vilest purpose ! And yet it is the very same with any one of *us*, who disguises himself with empty forms, and shews of piety. Such men seldom fail, at last, to drop the mask, and lay aside all shame to compass their worldly ends. Nor is it to be wondered at, that an hypocrite, who sins against his own conscience, against his best and noblest remedy, should be given over to the worst delusion, and the blackest crimes.

Some of the most flagrant and profane enormities of this kind, have been those of the Roman Catholics ; ---all perpetrated under cover of “ preserving the peace and unity of “ the Church ! ” --that sort of peace, which is found among the followers of Mahomet ! An union established upon the suspension of mens understanding, and rational faculties ! A peaceable union in profound darkness, and slavery ; instead of liberty and knowledge, and the comforts and blessings of both !

Finally ; let us hence be instructed, what a fatal thing it is, to be forsaken of the grace of God, and left to the sway of unruly appetites and desires. This is the hell upon earth,

earth, the emblem of that which is below-- to be set in the midst of all the incentives to lust, pride, revenge, and oppression; and then to be destitute of that reason, light and divine aid, which should enable us to curb the exorbitancies, and to avoid the direful effects of them.

And thus much for the history and circumstances, the views and motives, of this prince's cruelty. I am now,

II. To vindicate the justice and wisdom of Providence, in allowing such inhuman and flagitious conduct to exist in the world.

Those persons, who are so greatly alarmed at such occurrences, as to deem them inconsistent with the wisdom and mercy of the Divine Government; seem plainly to forget the very nature of *man*, as a moral and free subject of that government; and that it is no more a wonder God should suffer us to *commit* evil, than that he should give us the liberty of *willing* and *choosing* it; without which liberty, there could be no such thing as *moral virtue*. They moreover forget the many admirable purposes, which Providence may often have to serve, in permitting, for the present, even the utmost extravagancies
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of wicked men. Let us try the truth of this, in the instance before us. Here was seemingly an horrid calamity, both upon the parents, and, as we are apt to think, upon the children likewise. To ordain that the one of these (in present and temporal life) shall bear the iniquities of the other, is a most wise dispensation; and has an excellent tendency, to restrain the vices, to encourage the virtues, and so advance the prosperity, of nations and societies. All are hereby duly warned to be sober and virtuous, by an argument the most tender and prevailing; namely, the good of those that are nearest and dearest to us. With relation to the *fathers* of these murdered infants, *they* perhaps endured nothing more, than what their own immoralities and impiety might justly call down upon them. That the whole nation of the Jews, as well as Herod their king, was at this time exceedingly corrupt and wicked, is very certainly known. *They*, as well as *he*, paid little or no regard to all the demonstrations of heavenly power, that attended the birth of their Messiah; to the message of angels, congratulating them on this glorious event; to the arrival of the wise men from
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the East, confirming it by another miracle. To all this evidence, I say, they discovered a criminal inattention, and wilfully shut their eyes against it: and the parents of these babes (for any thing we can tell) might be among the foremost, in these and many other instances of guilt. What injustice was it then, for *them* to suffer by the hand of a tyrant; if they had rebelled against the God of mercies, and despised and rejected their own Lord of Life, the Saviour of Israel?

Well; but the children themselves, at least, were blameless, and had done no harm. And why do we conclude, that they now *received* such terrible harm? When the innocent and the just are taken away from evils to come; from evils, that far over-balance the pleasure of merely living; death, on such terms, is a blessing and a mercy. Let us then take the seemingly better side of the case of these infants; and suppose that they had all lived to the *full* life of man, to the envied period of our threescore years and ten: and what would they have lived to see? Why, they would have lived to see the downfall of their country, of their city Jerusalem, of their beautiful temple, the light of their
eyes,

eyes, and the joy of their heart; with such bloodshed and slaughter of both *fathers* and *children*, and such a bondage entailed upon their whole posterity; as would have forced the words of our Saviour from their wretched mouths: "Blessed had been the wombs that
 "had never borne us, and the paps that had
 "never given us suck!"

Finally; cast your eye *now* upon the guilty *cause* of all this calamity; behold the justice of the Divine proceedings; and try if you can think, that "he who keepeth Israel,
 "doth ever slumber or sleep." The death of this Herod, by the account of the Jews own historian, was as dreadful, as his reign had been tyrannical. He that made no conscience of the miseries of others, was himself made to feel unutterable tortures both of body and mind: He that sent so many Innocents to the grave, was eaten up of worms even before he reached the grave; and he that shewed no mercy, died without all compassion, either from God or man.

What a large field is here,

III. For serious reflection!

Vol. I.

H

1. Let

1. Let us learn, from these affecting examples, that temporary evils, and even the sorest afflictions, are no certain signs of guilt; nor let us hastily infer either the favour, or the displeasure of God, merely from the frowns and smiles of fortune in this present life. Innocents, we see, may suffer, and be untimely cut off; while the lewd and the profane may dwell at ease and undisturbed. But let us, in the mean while, ever rest assured, that the judgments of Heaven will not fail to watch over the virtuous man; and in due time to descend with full weight on the head of the merciless, and the oppressor.

2. While we are thinking upon these early and infant sufferers in the cause of Christ our great master, with the blessed Apostles, and other pure Christians and Martyrs of the first ages; let us not forget, what may possibly, yet, be our own case. We have no promise of being exempt from sufferings. We ought to be prepared for them, whenever the good Providence that hath so long blessed us with peace and liberty, may call us to the trial. How such preparation is to be made, and what a true sufferer for conscience is; I request you will inform yourselves

selves from those sweet words, in the portion of scripture appointed for the epistle of this day: "These are they who are not defiled
"with women; for they are virgins"---they are superior to all low and sensual desires. "They follow the Lamb, whithersoever he
"goeth"---they keep steady to their duty, in all circumstances of life. "They are re-
"deemed from among men"---by shunning the modish and prevailing vices of the world. "In their mouth there is no guile; but they
"are presented faultless before the throne of
"God." A most sublime, and a most necessary character! They that would be rewarded for dying, must first truly learn how to live: they that hope for the crown of martyrs, must first live like saints!

To the King Eternal, &c.

S E R M O N VII.

P S A L M lxviii. 18.

Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also; that the Lord God might dwell among them.

WHEN king David was now established in his throne, and had gained repeated victories over the enemies of his country; he celebrated the praises of God for all his successes, by summoning the house of Israel to bring up the ark of God to Jerusalem; that it might there be fixed for its constant residence, as the symbol of God's divine presence, in the place of his worship; whence he would give laws and oracles, and pronounce blessings upon his people. The procession was so magnificent, and is expressed in this Psalm in such lofty terms, as may

justly seem to have in view something future, and of a far nobler kind, in the *church of God*. Accordingly St. Paul, in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, takes the words I have now read to you, as a prophetic description of our *Saviour's* triumphant ascent into *Heaven*, and of the blessings he thence sent down on mankind, after he had conquered Satan and Sin and Death, those spiritual and most bitter of all enemies! Or at least the Apostle uses the words, as a very fit and significant *representation* of the great and happy event we are this day commemorating. The citation of them, in the epistle to the Ephesians, stands thus: "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

My present design is,

I. To set the several parts of this description in an easy and clear light; and to shew you how aptly St. Paul has applied them.

II. To direct the whole to the grand purpose of bettering our hearts, and amending our lives.

I. Our Lord's ascent into Heaven is here said to be a going up on high, or to some high

high place: "thou hast ascended on high." But this is a mere figure of speech. For Heaven, the seat and throne of God, is in truth no one particular place, is neither high nor low; since the Divine Being is equally present in all space, and fills and possesses the universe, even immensity itself. The metaphor is borrowed from the custom of great and martial princes, who after any important conquest in war, were wont to go up in splendid procession, to their chief court, or temple, or the like public building, (which was generally raised on some spot of height and eminence) and there to solemnize the glories of the victory. Such a place was the hill and palace of Sion; whither David now, and all the Jews afterwards went up, on public occasions, and for public thanksgivings. And the Romans in like manner had *their* Capitol; up to which their victorious generals so pompously ascended. This is the poor and imperfect imagery, that in vain attempts to set forth the majesty of that supreme Lord, who is now seated on the right hand of God. The ivory chair; the canopy of state, adorned with the work of mens hands; the retinue of servile, and enslaved

H 4 attendants;

attendants; the concourse and applauses of a loud and giddy multitude;---what resemblance can these things possibly bear, to the exaltation of the Son of God! to whom is given all dominion in heaven and earth, far above all principality and power: a dominion, and a kingdom, that all nations and kindreds and languages should obey him; that every tongue should confess him; and every knee should bow before him!

The next words are, "thou hast led captivity captive." The Eastern languages first introduced the bold and sublime manner of speaking. They often used the substantives themselves, instead of the adjectives; the more strongly to express the *qualities* of things or persons. Thus, a ruined or desolate city was called *desolation* itself: and Naomi, in her affliction, desired to be stiled *bitterness*: and the Latins afterwards, named a wicked man *Scelus*; a word that signifies *wickedness* itself. And so here, *captivity* means the *people* subdued, and made prisoners in great numbers, and in an absolute manner. This "captivity is led captive"---alluding to the method in which princes and conquerors in ancient times used to celebrate their triumphs:

umphs: the chief part of which parade, consisted in exposing* the poor wretches taken in battle, either tied to their chariots, or carried along with insult to the honour of the victor.

Perhaps to have seen David, in all his solemnity, bringing the ark of God's presence up to Mount Sion; or to have been a spectator at a Roman triumph; might have given a man as high an idea, as any thing can do, of human grandeur, and the splendor of earthly things. Yet let him but turn his thoughts awhile on the great Saviour of the World now entered upon his *heavenly* state: and all this lower dignity will vanish, as the mist before the rising morning; as the dew at the approach of meridian light!

What numbers of innocent creatures have been dragged into captivity, against all reason, against all natural law, only to display the power of the conqueror! What nations have been deprived of their laws and their liberties, who never deserved to have been treated

* Res gerere, et captos offendere civibus hostes,

Attingit solium Jovis, et celestia tentat. HORACE.

Excellent morality, and a sublime idea of Jupiter and his throne, and of heavenly things!

treated as enemies ! How inexpressibly more noble therefore, and more truly glorious, are the victories of *Christ*, the captain of *our* salvation ! *He* fought against none but the declared adversaries of *God*, of the harmony and happiness of all the rational world. All the honours to which *he* aspired, were such only, as flowed from the glory of the infinite Creator, and the blessing of his good and virtuous subjects. He led *Satan* captive, that *we* might all be set free from his accursed slavery. He waded through blood indeed, to the conquest of sin ; but it was his own most precious blood, not the blood of others. He carried Death in triumph, by suffering and dying for the very people he meant to subdue.

Let us now take a view of the third part of the description : “ thou hast received gifts “ for men.” The word in the original, is interpreted both to *receive*, and to *give*. Christ received the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, in order to distribute, and bestow them on mankind. And here I beg you will observe, with what propriety and beauty the metaphor is continued ! It was usual with commanders, in former ages, on solemnizing their

their triumphs and festivals, to send large presents, and give great entertainments, to their countrymen, relations, and friends. When David *here* carried up the ark with music and dancing and all demonstrations of joy; you read that he "sent to all the people, to the "women as well as the men, bread and flesh "and wine," to heighten their mirth. So, among the Romans, the emperor Marcus Aurelius gave near seven pounds of our money per man to the poor, at his famous triumph: and it became a matter of great emulation with their generals and princes, to outdo each other in these acts of popularity. But what are the bounties of the richest and most generous of mankind, when compared with those good and perfect gifts, that come from above! When the Son of God had suffered and conquered for us; and had made his solemn procession to his *heavenly* kingdom; *He* too had his gifts to dispense, and his bounties to send down upon us. Bounties worthy of the superlative dignity of his person, and of the wondrous work he had now performed! He did not indeed answer the expectation of some of his yet ignorant followers, by pouring down upon them a
torrent

torrent of secular enjoyments, of worldly honours and preferments. No; *his* gifts were of a divine and spiritual nature; graces that would enrich the mind, and perfect the inward and real man; that were to adorn and enlighten the soul, and all its faculties; and lift it to the resemblance of its heavenly original. These inestimable benefits he began to confer, as upon this day; inspiring his Apostles to preach and propagate his holy religion, with a wonderful demonstration and power of the spirit; enabling them to confirm its truth and excellency, by the purity of their lives, and the constancy of their sufferings; and at length to write records of the life and actions and doctrine of their blessed Master, and leave them as the standard of belief and practice to all generations. These gifts therefore did by no means terminate in those Apostles and first teachers, but reach down to *us*: their inspirations certify *us*, in the great rule of life and morals; their miracles are the basis of our faith: their writings are our infallible guide, our sure light, our everlasting comfort. In *them* we see and read the most valuable blessings, the most excellent favours, that God himself can

can bestow: the free pardon of our sins; deliverance from the most deadly of foes; the promise of an eternal kingdom, of an "inheritance undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us."

There is another circumstance attending the description of these gifts, which still raises the value and the mercy of them, above all that is called good, benevolent, or compassionate. Our Lord sends them down upon *men*: not only so, but upon the *rebellious*; even upon his *enemies*. It is the part of too many of the *grandees* of this world, to aim at conquest and dominion for their own sakes only; without any eye to the good of the people whom they have subdued. But the all-powerful arm of Heaven ever works *its* way, with purposes of goodness and of love; and while we are its enemies, strives to overcome and to govern us, that we may become its friends. What an infinite difference then is there, between the pride and ambition of vain men, and the dispensations of a gracious God! When *they* obtain victories, they disperse their gifts indeed; but to whom is it, generally and principally? To their allies, their friends, and their flatterers:
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when Christ enters upon *his* triumph, the joy and the blessing is to his *enemies*. With victorious *mortals*, a few receive the benefit, by the blood and slaughter of a multitude; a few are made to rejoice, over the tears and the distresses of thousands: but with the Redeemer of the World, how far otherwise is it? *Here* the injured potentate condescends and submits, that the guilty subject may be pardoned and restored; the victor suffers, that the vanquished may have peace; and the friend himself dies, that the adversaries may live.

The last words of this most amiable representation are, "that the Lord God," their conqueror, "might dwell among them," as their eternal defender and preserver. Many countries that have yielded to the sword, have immediately been left to the government of some deputy tyrant, and have never more beheld the face of their first subduer: but whoever yields himself to the Almighty God, is for ever under his all-seeing eye,---can never be destitute of his divine presence and protection!

I have done *now* with the several members of the text; wherein our Lord's Ascension,
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and its happy effects, are set forth in such pleasing and lovely characters.

II. Let us in the next place consider the practical uses, to which these things ought to be applied by us. And,

1. If there be any truth in this, and other similar prophecies of scripture; what a solid foundation has every sincere believer for his hope of a future and immortal state! In spite of all the impious cavils of idle pretenders to truth and learning, certain it is, that there was pointed out and promised, through the successive ages of the world, an illustrious person, who was to be a king of righteousness, a conqueror of the kingdom of darkness and wickedness. This person, and this spiritual empire, with the æra and circumstances and progress of both, are known to have been foretold, vast tracts of years before their accomplishment. The events have answered to the predictions, in due and regular order: history and facts demonstrate the correspondence between the one and the other. No power, no foresight, but that of Heaven itself, could possibly be the cause of such an agreement. So that, if there be truth in
God,

God, the religion of Christ must be true also. How sweet therefore, and delightful, is this reflection to every virtuous Christian! If your Lord be "ascended on high;" why is it, but to prepare a place for *you*? If he "came down, and be again gone up;" why did he so, but as he himself has assured us, to draw every pious and faithful disciple after him? Did he send down his gifts upon us from above:---With what view, but that he intends by *them*, to qualify us for the *final* gift of eternal life?

2. That our blessed Lord is thus our exalted Saviour and Benefactor in Heaven, should persuade us all, to hold ourselves in a constant readiness to follow him thither; by beginning *now* to have "our conversation in "Heaven;" by such an improvement of his gifts, and of the light of his Gospel, as may render us worthy of a seat in those happy abodes.

It is remarkable, that after our Saviour was risen from the dead, he did not converse with his disciples in that free and open manner, which, in his former life, was usual with him. He ate and drank and was seen
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amongst them no oftener, during his stay of forty days, than was sufficient to prove the reality, and unexceptionable truth, of his *resurrection*: intimating by this reserve, that he *now* belonged no more to this world, but to the kingdom that is above. And if *we* have any hope, one day to ascend after him; *we* too must learn to forget the world; I mean, to forget all its needless vanities, all its superfluous follies, all its sensual pleasures; and to imitate *him* our great example. Who, when he “left us, and went to the Father,” took none even of our infirmities, much less any of our vices, along with him. This master of humility took no pride; this lover of peace, and maker of *our* peace, permitted nothing of discord, envy, or revenge, to accompany him into that holy place. No inordinate affection, no ungoverned passion, was suffered to ascend with the Son of Purity and Perfection! “Into *that* kingdom,” says his beloved Apostle, who has drawn it out in all the beauties that human language can paint;---“into that kingdom there shall in “no wise enter any thing that defileth, or is “unclean; or that loveth and maketh a lie.”

Whoever therefore amongst us, wishes to gain admittance into those blissful regions; let him throw off all the clogs and impediments, all the vitious habits, that will for ever retard and stop his flight upward: let him be clothed with that justice, piety, humility, and charity, which alone can give him wings to mount, and to "meet his Lord in the air." If ever you expect to see the face of your exalted Redeemer once more with joy; you must think and act and live, as if you were *now* continually in his sight. If you would not then be left behind, when he shall "appear the second time unto salvation;" if you would not then cleave to the ground, unable to rise and attend your Saviour to Heaven; you must *now* begin to shake off all earthly desires; you must be willing to part with every low, with every worldly and carnal lust, that will chain you down to the earth, and leave you to perish in its final ruins.

To sum up the whole, in the words of the great Apostle --- We must all, without exception or distinction, "set our constant and "fullest affections on the things that are above,

“bove, where Christ sitteth on the right
“hand of God.” For Heaven itself will be
no Heaven to that man, who wants the
graces, or misemploys the talents, that are
to prepare his taste for its supreme enjoy-
ments.

To the King Eternal, &c.

to force, where China is on the right
 "The German fleet will be
 transferred to the Pacific, who have the
 right of navigation in the Pacific, and
 to protect the trade in the Pacific
 to the East, and to the West, and to the South.

S E R M O N IX.

ROMANS xii. 11.

Not slothful in business---fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.

THE two parts of which these words consist, appear plainly to comprehend all the duties and offices, all the useful qualities, that were intended to be exercised, or that can be desirable, in the life of man. They enjoin us the great virtue of industry; a diligent and steady application of mind to the business and concerns of both worlds, wherein we are all to have our parts; a becoming activity in our temporal affairs, in the several conditions and callings allotted us by Providence in the present state; and a more zealous care, even a fervency of endeavours, about that which is future and eternal.

In what follows, I shall speak of this duty, with regard both to the temporal and spiritual life, under one and the same article. And, the more effectually to recommend it to your attention and practice, I would first describe it to you, in its different branches and properties: that so we may be the better able to pronounce, who is justly and properly the industrious man.

First then: This excellent virtue, like many others, is liable to be run into false extremes; and, under a wrong name, to have the true thing lost. For, beside the genuine and laudable industry, there is also a vain, and a vicious one. The excellency of it does not consist in bare activity, either of body or mind; but in a proper exercise of the faculties of both; and in a wise choice of good and useful employments, whereby some real service may be done, to ourselves, to our neighbour, to our Maker; and the true ends and purposes of life be promoted and advanced. As for mere *action*, that is going forward every where; and the world is a busy scene, in all its parts, and in every corner of it. But the work of each particular man, as well as of whole bodies of men, is like

like a ship upon the sea; which, if it has not an hand of wisdom and honesty to steer it right, has a thousand chances against one of going wrong.

It would move the heart of any considerate person to generous pity, to see what numbers of mankind are impertinently busy and laborious; how full of thoughts, and abundant in designs; and all for the little pleasures, the low amusements, the insignificant sports and diversions of life; as if time and reason and understanding, those most precious gifts of Heaven, were given us to be laid out upon things that neither tend to improve the mind itself, nor contribute at all to increase the common stock of happiness. The prophets have figured this set of men in their true colours: "they hatch cockatrice-eggs, "and weave the spider's web: they sow the "wind, and shall reap the whirlwind:" they take great pains in "hewing out cisterns, that "will hold no water; and labour for that "which satisfieth not."

Such is the vain industry; whose object is only to waste time in vanities, and idle pleasures; in things that can hardly be said at all to concern us, or to belong to us. But vi-

tious industry is still far worse. The man who "riseth up early, and late taketh his rest," and eateth no other bread than the bread of care and great anxiety, to no better purpose than to abound in useless wealth, and heap up needless riches: the wretch who plots and watches in mischievous designs, in schemes to raise himself upon the ruin of others; whose hands are always at work to compass his revenge, and his feet swift-running to shed blood: men who are active to sow strife and create factions, and "sleep not," as Solomon says, "except they have done mischief, and their sleep is taken away unless they cause some to fall," unless they can rob an antagonist of his character, or spoil a rival of his business;—every branch of these and the like busy workers, are the industrious slaves of that evil spirit, who, with an activity far beyond that of any mortal man, "runneth to and fro in the earth, seeking whom he may devour."

How widely distant therefore from all this, is the virtuous industry; which keeps the good man within his own proper bounds; fixes him to his proper calling, to the work that Providence has given to his hand, to the
work

work wherein he may be serviceable to himself and to his family, useful to his neighbours, and beneficial to the common-wealth. In this he labours, as the sphere in which he shall do certain good, and be ever remote from doing harm. Thus the scholar is worthy to be called industrious, whose time and thoughts are engaged with the interesting and substantial parts, not the light froth and sophistry, of learning. And he is the industrious lawyer, who studies the justice and truth and equity of his profession, and of his cause; not the tricks and evasions that may be found in them by a keen wit and a knavish eye.

So again, in religion; "fervency of spirit" in religious concerns, should always be regulated by the same wise measures. It is not a fiery zeal for the shews and outside and circumstantialia of piety: it does not vent itself in noise and dispute, about the modes and forms and ceremonies of the church. No! its merit is displayed in a zealous cultivation of the superior virtues and graces of the Christian life; in a profound veneration for the sacred truths of the Gospel, the fruits of which are to appear in the practice of righteousness,

teousness, charity, and sobriety. This then I lay down as the foundation of all commendable industry; namely, that we first duly consider, and rightly choose, the matters, on which our pains and labour are to be spent.

2. Next to a rational choice of the subject-matter of his industry, every judicious man will assign and set apart to himself some stated, fixed, and convenient hours for business, whether it be of the worldly, or the religious kind. He will proportion his time to his work; and will equal both of them to his abilities, and strength of body and of mind. True industry is evermore guided by discretion. It is not an hurry of business, nor a torrent of the spirits in labour; but a cool and a methodical proceeding. An easy constancy carries it best forward; and method is the life and beauty of it. They who never work, but by sudden and hasty fits of industry, in things that relate either to this world, or the next; throwing all their time and business into confused heaps; will lose the use of a great many of its parts; and one thing will inevitably interfere with another: while studies and affairs that are sorted
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and arranged into their proper seasons, are all most effectually performed; and few or none of them are overlooked or neglected. Hence no man, who judges as he ought, will ever incumber himself with a multiplicity of business; with more than the mind and its attention can bear, and the bodily spirits can well support; with more than is consistent with a regularity and a comfort, with a variety that may render it unclaying, and returns that may be constant without fatigue or oppression. And this is what I call the pious and the prudent industry;--which the wise preacher perfectly understood, and has honoured by that well-known and sage remark; "there is a time for every purpose" "and for every work." But,

3. The course of life is hardly ever so uniform, but that there will be some critical junctures, and occasions of doing good, which will demand a special degree of your activity: and these a truly industrious man will never pass by. The accidental condition of himself, his neighbourhood, or his country, may call him to some extraordinary exercise of his charity, his labour, his study, or his bravery. And there are very few of us, but who

who find themselves in a capacity of serving both God and man (and themselves too) much more at one time than another; and of doing that generous good in one day or hour, which many a year may not afford the like advantage for. And thus, I say, he that would best improve his life, must watch the happy seasons, and favourable opportunities of life.

4. Virtuous industry will always exert itself with a particular regard to the *situation* a man is placed in. It is a vast variety of conditions and employments, which Providence has wisely thrown into the present life of man; thereby to call into action every human and divine virtue; each station and office requiring a peculiar diligence, a peculiar species of industry, that is proper to fill and adorn the character. Thus, for example, what is the diligence, that ought to belong to a *prince*, or any man in authority under him? What is it, but a conscientious and vigilant pursuit of the great and good ends, for which authority was given to one mortal over many;---the welfare and protection of his people; the security of their property; the safety of their persons; the prosperity of their

their commerce, and the freedom of their consciences. To which important purposes, ought he not to have a strict guard upon himself, that he may be truly able to govern others? Must he not curb, with a generous rein, his own affections; that they be never biassed by low partiality, or corrupted by mean flattery? Must he not keep his eye ever clear and open, that it be not blinded to the true interest of his subjects, or to his own true glory?

Again; what is the diligence, that is to preserve *honour* alive---that is to nourish, and to support it? For, unless carefully and tenderly cherished, it will soon wither and decay. Is it not a diligence in laudable actions, pointed at the public good; shewing the person that wears it, to be above the pride and insolence, and the many dangerous temptations to misconduct, into which exalted stations are so apt to lead a weak and ignoble mind!

Farther; if a *rich* man, with any good conscience, would ask himself, in what way *he* is to practice this same virtue of industry; he would quickly answer, that it must be done, not by a restless anxiety to accumulate
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still more and more of what he himself does *not* want, but by a bountiful assistance of them that *do* want. *His* diligence is to be employed, in keeping his riches wisely, and in using them well; in looking out, with an eye of care and benignity, for suitable and worthy objects, towards whom he may shew himself the faithful steward of that universal Lord, who hath placed those gifts and talents in his hands.

Moreover; the man of wealth, as well as the man of power, is to set forth this virtue, by watching continually over his own inclinations; that he be not drawn aside into those follies of youth, those vitious and hurtful pleasures, so commonly seen, where young heads and plentiful fortunes meet together; or into that no less criminal sin of *avarice*, to which old age never fails to enslave the breast, that has once been habituated to the sordid love of riches.

To finish this topick; does a *poor* man want instruction, how *he* is to discharge his part of this eminent duty? *His* lesson is short and plain. He is to labour, both with his hands and his heart; with his hands, to procure the necessaries of life, in the way
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Divine Wisdom hath appointed for him; and with his heart, to work himself into a devout and chearful submission to the dispensations of that Providence, to which we all owe the several blessings we enjoy, or the wants we may lie under; and from which we are all to expect a just and full reward of our industry, whether it be exercised in labour, or in bounty, or in patience.

5. I will add but one remark more, towards fixing the notion of a truly diligent man; viz. “there can be no such thing as virtuous industry, without a strict regard to honesty, good frugality, and sobriety.” It was rightly said by the princely philosopher; “he that laboureth, laboureth for himself,” ---that what he acquires may be *spent* upon himself in a decent and prudent manner, not be lavished away faster than it was gotten. Diligence in labouring for what is only to feed a sottish and an extravagant humour, is even worse than laziness itself.

Again; “he laboureth for *himself*,” and so we may *all* do, and yet never labour *against* any *other* man. The world is a very spacious and ample stage to act upon: we want no justling, no preying upon each other’s livelihood

liveliness or advantages. Industry never needs to step out of the road of honesty; and whenever it does, it puts on a new character, and indeed one of the most hateful and formidable in the world: for such is the reputation of an active knave, and an industrious villain.

Once more: True diligence, I said, must likewise include *sobriety*. The hands can work to but little purpose, while intemperance spoils the head: and where no regard is paid to the health of the body, and the sedateness of the mind, business must of necessity go on very slowly and confusedly, and at length be quite lost. But, in a word, wherever prudence guides the head, and honesty the heart, and sobriety the passions; that man shall eat the fruit of his own labour, industry will be a right hand to his vocation, and all his work shall prosper.

This is the duty, I thought it worth while to be thus particular in describing; as it relates to the several conditions and characters, that form human society. And upon the faithful observance of it in the various ranks and orders of mankind, what vast effects, what a weight of blessings, must depend! The
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well-being and prosperity of kingdoms; the flourishing state of towns and cities; the plenty enjoyed by separate families; the splendor of the rich; the glory of the great; the peace and good conscience of every private man. But these being more properly arguments to persuade us all to the *practice* of this lovely virtue, shall be reserved for the subject of another discourse.

S E R M O N X.

ROMANS xii. ii.

Not slothful in business---servent in spirit, serving the Lord.

I Made choice of these words, from which to recommend to your serious attention and practice, the eminent duty of industry, in the business both of the present and the future life. In order to which good purpose, I have already been pretty large and particular, in describing this virtue; as it belongs to the several characters, the various situations and conditions, of human life: that we may be the better able to distinguish the true from the false denomination; and to judge who, and who only, is the man of virtuous industry and religious diligence.

And *now* I am to exhort and incite you all, in your several capacities, to a zealous

discharge of it, from the following arguments.

1. Our obligation to the duty I am speaking of, will even force itself upon the mind of any man, who will attend at all, either to the frame and constitution of his own nature, or to the state of the world about him, or to the plain intentions of the Divine Providence. Our *bodies* are made for it: every organ, from the eye to the hand and the foot, is adapted to it. The faculties of the *mind* do exactly correspond to the same end: understanding and reason, every desire and affection, is a call to action, study, and industry. The *life* we are placed in, speaks aloud the same thing: the necessaries and conveniencies; the numberless wants; nay and even the proper and lawful pleasures and enjoyments of it; cannot be supplied nor furnished without it. Demands, from all quarters, flow in upon us: ourselves, our children, our neighbourhood, all claim their share of our diligent good offices: and our very country is a loser by every hand that is idle, and every mouth that is fed in sloth and laziness. In all these circumstances, the lines of Providence are clearly to be read: and
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you may as well fancy, that the sun was made to shine for no purpose; or that the earth brings forth her fruits for no designed use of the creatures that inhabit her; as that *man* could have a rational soul, and so well framed a body given him, to be employed only upon trifles, and vanities, and amusements. It may be imagined perhaps, that the state of *paradise* must have been exceeding happy; where the ground produced every thing of its own accord, and no labour was required from the hands of man. No; you do not read so at all. Adam had work provided for him, as well as *we*. He was to preserve his pleasures by his industry. "The Lord God," says the scripture, "took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it, and to keep it." And had Adam, and his family, lived much longer in it; and been half so idle as some of *us* are; his paradise would soon have become like the field of Solomon's sluggard; "the vineyard of a man void of understanding, grown over with thorns, and nettles upon the face of it;" and would have been a demonstration of the truth of that scripture which tells us that

man, even the *first* man, "was born to prosper labour, as the sparks fly upward."

2. Let me desire of you to reflect, "what a variety of work there lies upon the hands of every man, to perform in life." In some indeed it is less, in others larger; but I am sure *all* will find enough to do, either as men, or as Christians. In the former, how many things are to be learned, as we grow up; how many to be done, after we are grown! A livelihood to be gotten, by the generality; and a good character by all, that have any notion of what is good or valuable. To live without a character, to any generous mind, is the most dark and uncomfortable state. It will require much pains, believe me, to rear up a *tolerable* man; but an *useful* and a great man, scarcely ever was, hardly ever will be found, without great vigilance, labour, and resolution. And even still more is required, to the forming a *Christian*, and a *good* man. Virtue is seated on a hill; it is not an idle heart, that can ascend up to her. She is not the offspring of chance, nor a gift of nature, nor of overpowering grace; but the child of *industry*. Her very essence consists

consists always in a painful attention, oftentimes in very difficult efforts, of soul. To clear away prejudices from the understanding; to rectify and curb a disorderly will and inclinations; to conquer importunate appetites; to reform, perhaps, a vicious habit, the hardest task in all human life; and, which is the next hard part, to work up a courage that will stand against strong temptations, and resist the power of numerous and fashionable bad examples; and, finally, to provide for your own selves, to accomplish your own minds, and to have something wherewith to administer to the advice and instruction, the support and wants, of your fellow Christian---have you all this to do, and can you think you have much time to bestow upon idle pleasures, and drowsy inaction, or merely sensual gratifications? Then you must look upon the *scriptures* to have been very lavish and needless, in their warm exhortations to you, “to exercise yourselves
“unto godliness; to strive, and to run; to
“fight, and to stand fast; to watch, and to
“be sober; to labour, and to give diligence
“in all things.”

3. Let me entreat you therefore to remember, not only how great the work of every man's life is, but how *limited a time* we have to do it in, though it is certain God requires no more of us, than the careful improvement of that short time. Your full life is but of a few days; but your life of *business*, of much fewer. Your infancy and childhood take up a considerable part; wherein you can do nothing, but "think as a child, and speak as a child," and act like one. And by that time an age ripe for business has lasted you a few years; the grey hairs come upon you, with the dim eyes, and the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees---weaknesses and diseases of *nature*, that no physic can reach, nor all human art can cure. Had we a whole eternity to live in, it would be a pity, and a sin, to mispend and abuse any one part of it. The examples of all superior beings would render it a shame to us. The blessed inhabitants of Heaven, they that excel in strength, in length of time, and in all perfections, far beyond *us*; how active, and incessantly busy, are *they*! vigilantly waiting at God's throne, listening to the voice of his word,

word, ever ready and speedy to do his commands! Nay the great God himself, all-sufficient, infinitely and unchangeably happy, even *he* is eternally working, everlastingly careful and active; never rests from his works of providence and grace; his eye continues watchful over every thing that he has made; and his arm is ever stretched out to uphold the universe in order, beauty, and happiness. Surely then *man* can never be the creature, that alone has a license to be idle; while the example of all nature stirs him up to diligence---to diligence in the task of a very short space, that is to be rewarded with an happiness of an endless duration.

4. Let us not forget, "how *laudable* and "*reputable* is a life of industry." There is no profession, no business, no labour, which can be called useful, that ought to be held contemptible. From the spade to the scepter, and from the plough to the crowned head, they are all good, and needful, and beautiful, in their kinds: they are linked into a dependency upon each other: Divine Providence is the author of them all: and every man in his place, when he fills that place well, is a blessing to himself, and to his

his country; and, while he diligently follows the labour of his hands, he is truly and properly serving his God. As it is to ingenious and working heads, that we owe all the noble inventions; the fine arts and sciences; the navigation and architecture; the improvements in trade, commerce, husbandry, and mechanicks; whereby kingdoms are made to shine in plenty and grandeur;---so the general cause, why one nation is found more prosperous than another, is, the *industry*, wherein the people of the one excel that of the other: the diligence, I say, both of them that invent, and of them that *execute* useful operations. For the finest heads could do very little towards the happiness of the world, if labouring hands were wanting to bring their schemes into practice. So that whatever becomes of the character of the gentleman who does nothing, or of the rich man who is good for nothing; nobody will deny the honest and industrious man his due praise and commendation. In real truth, as idleness can never be defended by any circumstances; so neither can the greatest fortunes derive any true honour and respect to the person that is guilty of it. Men may
pay

pay honour to your title, but very little to your person, where your qualifications demand little: and where there is no reverence from the heart; the bowings of the head, and cringings of the body, are easily paid, as the just and only tribute to minds weak and worthless.

I would add to this, that industry is the part of a truly *generous* and manly spirit; of a mind that disdains to owe its subsistence to the labour and liberality of other men; that scorns, like a drone, to feed upon the common stock, without bringing in *his* share; like vermin, to pilfer from the granary; to be dependent, and to be despised!

5. Be persuaded to an industrious course of life, from the “pleasure, contentment, and health, that naturally attend it.” What can it be less than delight itself, for a man to feel and reflect on himself, as proceeding in the true method of life; as pursuing the rule and path pointed out to him by Providence; as employing his mind, and all its faculties, to purposes natural, and worthy of him, all the powers of his body to the ends intended by the good governor of the world, and to the benefit of his fellow-creatures—

To

To look back each night on the labours of a well-spent day; and to view the continual monuments of his own good endeavours--- To know himself guiltless of scandal and reproach, from himself and others; that no creditor suffers loss through *his* folly and extravagance--- *that* modish way of cheating and robbery; which, if it escapes present punishment, will find a sure vengeance from another tribunal--- To consider, that he enjoys what no heart can grudge him; what the worst eye cannot envy; what a tyrant would scorn to violate; and what rapine itself would blush to deprive him of. The fruit of honest labour is reaped freest from danger, and is secured by innocence!

Observe moreover, how healthy, as well as pleasant, is a life of diligence. Proper labour is the parent of health; the spring that works the whole bodily constitution: creates digestion; diffuses true nourishment; and turns every humour of the blood into its proper channel; prevents a thousand distempers, adds strength to strength, and gives taste and relish to enjoyment. The case is the same, with the superior and immortal part of us. Study and attention extend the whole capacity

city of the soul, and enliven every one of its powers; enlarge the understanding, and fix the will and desires upon still better and higher attainments. On the contrary, how does laziness melt away the spirits, and soften every fibre of the heart! How foul, and listless, and rusty does it render the mind towards any thing that is useful and praiseworthy! like the water, when it stagnates into putrefaction; and the air, for want of motion, into noxious and pestilential vapours; and like the earth, uncultivated, over-run with thorns and briars! See here the just ways and wisdom of Providence; that the very thing, which is to procure a man his livelihood, should make him best able to enjoy it---that at the same time you work for your meat, you work for your health!

6. One consideration more shall finish all I have to say upon this important subject; and that is, “how safe and secure, in point of *“ religion and morals, is the life of a diligent
“ man, above that of a thoughtless and in-
“ active one!”* Idleness is the nursery of all irregularity and vice; and no person is in so much danger of evil, as one that has nothing to do, or that resolves to do nothing. He
lays

lays himself open to every folly: his desires, inclinations, and affections, are exposed to every article of vanity, wantonnefs, and impertinency of action: he is the game and the prey of every tempter; the ready associate of every lewd companion; the follower and imitator of every wicked example. The reason of this is exceedingly evident: the minds of all men are naturally active and busy: something or other must be thought upon, something must be doing: if they be not employed in honest business, they run inevitably into mischievous practices. Industry is a fence to virtue and innocence; the guardian of the heart, keeping all its avenues safe from temptations. It prevents the occasions of a thousand lustful thoughts and freakish imaginations; holds the mind, and all its faculties and passions, steady and firm, within the bounds of reason and nature, and the blessing and protection of the divine and good Providence.

And now I may fairly trust it with yourselves, whether I have not spoken what is sufficient to convince any serious Christian, of the manifest difference both in duty and interest, in credit and pleasure, between the

two sorts of men here concerned;---the idle man in his calling, whose real sentiment of himself cannot but affright and shame him; whose conscience cannot but hourly reproach him, that he has lived for nothing, filled a place in the world only to hide his talent in the earth, and abuse the faculties given him by his creator;---of the difference, I say, between this person, and the honest industrious man, be his calling never so mean, his station never so low, who has performed his part diligently, has answered the purpose of the wise hand that placed him here, and with a chearful and well grounded hope waits for the blessed day, wherein he shall “rest from his labours, “and his works shall follow him.”

To the King Eternal, &c.

very sort of men that concerned--the little
 man in his calling, whose real tendency of
 himself cannot but slight and shame him;
 whose confidence cannot but hourly reproach
 him, and his habitual formality, which arises
 in a world only to hide his talent in the earth,
 and abuse the talents given him by his crea-
 tor--of the distance, I say, between the
 person, and the power and famous name, be-
 coming never so great, the nation never so
 low, who has performed his part diligently,
 has answered the purpose of the wise hand
 that placed him here, and with a cheerful
 and well grounded hope waits for his discharge,
 and when he shall "see his hour is come,"
 "and his work shall follow him."

S E R M O N XI.

LUKE XV. 17.

And when he came to himself, he said; how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare; and I perish with hunger!

I Think it was a most judicious observation of the great and learned Grotius, that, of all the discourses our blessed Saviour delivered by way of fable or parable, there is hardly any one so lively and beautiful, so pleasing and engaging, so interesting and instructive, as this of the prodigal son. The persons represented in it, are such, as it is of the highest concern to us to behold in their true characters: and the several parts they bear, set before us such truths, as call for the utmost attention from every serious and rational mind. In the *father* you have displayed the

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universal

universal kindness, love, and mercies of God; shedding down his bounty, grace, and pardon upon every *son*, upon every individual of mankind, in wise and just measures. In the *two sons* we see laid open, in most artful and affecting strokes, the general behaviour of men under all these dispensations of Heaven; the easy and happy condition of the sober and virtuous; the want of due compassion to the failings of our brethren, of which even good men are sometimes guilty; and especially every lewd and debauched creature may there see (I might have said he *must* see) his own deplorable state, his own uncomely face, as it were in a glass.

Of these two sons, belonging to the house of the same good and tender father, the elder continued with him, and helped to carry on the business, and to promote the interests, of the family: the younger, foolishly taking a separate portion, went off, spent it all in riot and idleness; and, upon his humble and sorrowful return, was received again, and forgiven;---at which unexpected reception, the brother, it seems, was greatly displeased and offended.

Now,

Now, in these representations, our Saviour had both a particular view, and a general one. The first was, to confute that vain and presumptuous conceit of the Jews, that *they* and their *nation*, were the only race of men upon earth, whom God intended to be his *sons*, and *church*, and *people*: the Gentiles, that is to say all the rest of the world, though returning to him in never so much penitence and contrition, were for ever to be excluded from all favour. In opposition to this darling notion, our Lord allows, that at present indeed, the Jews might pass under the character of the elder son; but at the same time maintains, that the younger (the *Gentile*, the *Heathen*) had *his* portion too; nay and that, when he had wasted that portion in idolatry, superstition, and vice, yet upon true repentance, and obedience to the light of the Gospel, he should be received to mercy, and be admitted into the covenant of salvation. This is the particular doctrine of the parable: The general one is, that God, in this same covenant of his Son, has in store, pardon and forgiveness for truly repenting sinners of all kinds and degrees, even to that of the prodigal himself;--which, in this place, denotes,

not a person who has been guilty of some *single acts*, though of hainous and deadly sin; but, what is far worse, an *old* and *habitual* transgressor: even the man who, through a long series of debaucheries, may be said to have forgotten God, and to be unmindful of every thing that is good; and yet at last, on some happy occasion offering, lays timely hold of it, considers better, reforms his evil habits, and returns to his duty.

These are the great points, which our kind and blessed Master has taken such peculiar care to illustrate, that he has, in this chapter, employed three distinct parables, the better and more strongly to fix them in our minds; namely, that of the “lost sheep,” that of the “lost piece of silver,” and this of the “lost prodigal.”

In which last beautiful emblem, though, as I have just hinted to you, there be many excellent lessons and morals contained; yet I purpose, at present, to confine myself to these two, which the verse before us seems more immediately to suggest.

I. What wretched effects, what depravity and distraction, a customary and continued course of sin will produce in the mind. The
prodigal

prodigal is painted here, as a person that had been, all this while, beside himself, and had now recovered his right mind.

II. To what deplorable circumstances such a man is reduced, even by his own confession and self-reflection, in his calm and better thoughts: "how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare; and I perish with hunger."

First then; in the former of these heads, I am to keep up a proper parallel between the disordered condition of the natural man, and that of the moral one; or between the madness and distraction of the brain, and that of the heart or conscience.

This profligate youth was out of himself, as it were; is compared to one drunk, or in a phrensy; while he was in the career of his debaucheries: and when he became sensible of the dreadful effects, and viewed his sad situation in a serious light; he is said to have "come to himself again." In order to maintain this comparison, there is no need of supposing, that lewd and vicious men have not the same natural powers and abilities with the better and wiser; or that, in other respects, they may not be equally sensible and ingeni-

ous. No; this very thing is their condemnation; that their *talents* remain the same, while *they* shamefully pervert the end, and right use of them; or that they exert the same faculty of reason in some things, and suffer it to drop and decay in others which are of infinitely greater importance; that they are acute and sagacious enough in providing for the gratification of their humours and passions, but lay aside all judgment, and seem to be void of all taste, in moral, and truly manly conduct. To make this case good, let us examine what are really the effects of vicious habits,

1. Upon the understanding.
2. Upon the will, desires, and affections.
3. Upon a man's external actions, upon his outward and visible conduct.

1. Let us take notice, how the *understanding*, the first and leading faculty of the human soul, suffers, in its best operations, from an habitual progress of vicious indulgencies. The prodigal, who had formerly enjoyed the blessings of a plentiful home, the ease and sweets of a father's house; yet, as he grew up in riotous fancies, and lewd sensualities, at a distance from it, he by degrees lost the
relish

relish of them all, and judged of youthful happiness in quite another manner. No man, who attends to what passes within his own mind, can fail of seeing, what a powerful influence, inveterate habits, and unrestrained lusts, have upon it. They engross all its thoughts, and draw all its notions and ideas in a train where no room is left for contemplations of any other kind. Actions of reason require a mind free, and unpossessed of other engagements: sensual pleasures corrupt and enslave it; the heats of passion stifle and smother it. The understanding, like the sight, is easily deceived, when false colours are laid before it; and the judgment will have very little power to discern what is right, while gross mists of prejudice are thrown about it: the grossest prejudice against all virtuous principles, is an habit of licentiousness and vice. Try the experiment of this, either in theory or practice. The Atheist (I mean one who is so, because he resolves not to take the pains to be good) sees all those beauties of the creation around him, which clearly bespeak an hand of exquisite wisdom, power, and providence;---but, rather than acknowledge them to be the work of a God,

whose laws he should then be obliged to obey, he will attribute them all to a mere *name*, to words that have absolutely no meaning. And while every plain honest man knows well enough, that Chance never could make a *watch*; nor Fortune, or Fate, ever yet build a *house*; this man imagines it could create, and can govern, a whole world. In like manner, in point of *practice*, the extravagant, and the debauched man, know, like other people, what health and sickness are; what are the comforts of an unbroken constitution, and the pains and plagues of a body half rotten by lewdness, and poisoned with the excesses of luxurious enjoyments. The cruel and the revengeful can see, nay and admire, in another man, the lovely pictures of justice, benignity, and good-nature. But what are all these? Mere notions, and slight speculations! things allowed indeed in idea, but never attended to, never perceived nor understood with any concern, with any proper relish of mind. The very first forbidden act of pleasure finds its former welcome; the next temptation has the old taste, meets the accustomed appetite: and though *understanding* be still left in the man, it is perverted, and overpowered, and of no use.

2. And if thus it fares with the understanding, the prime and leading faculty; the *will*, with all the inclinations and affections of the *heart*, must necessarily suffer the same distortions; as the effect will always answer to its cause. The true wisdom and perfection of all rational beings, consists in this; that their choices and desires be suited to the dignity of their nature; and be placed upon such objects, as are agreeable to it, and worthy of it. This is to be happy, because this is to be good. The false enjoyments that arise from inordinate passions, and every kind of riotous living, are the reverse, and the ruin of all this. They will hurry a man to choose what he has found and *felt* to do him the greatest mischief; and will drag him into pain, under the mere name, and sottish notion of pleasure. As long as ever the prodigal had a penny left, wherewith to indulge in the follies of his lewd companions; not even the prospect of approaching want, was sufficient to persuade him to prudence and good husbandry: nor did the tenderness of a kind and bountiful father, make him at all desirous to return home, and to seek for plenty by repentance. So neither will the prospect of
a far

a far greater good, draw the heart of man to pursue it, who has been habituated to lust after, and to enjoy, the contrary evil. Tell the drunkard, or the adulterer, of the speedy consequences that await his follies; nay, let him sink under the load of a diseased body, of a dejected and enfeebled mind;---he no sooner retrieves his spirits, but he determines, in the words of the prophet, "I will seek it yet again: come, fetch wine; and to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant." Shew the covetous man, the way to some gainful, though iniquitous bargain; let him see the scandal, and the danger, that will probably attend it; the penalties he *may* incur at present, and the *far greater* penalties he *must* incur hereafter; still the love of money, that root of all evil, is a passion that will be almost sure to turn the balance, and direct the choice.

In few words; such is "the deceitfulness of sin," that though its highest delights are exceedingly mean and low compared with the rational pleasures of religion and virtue; yet whoever has once devoted himself to it, is in perpetual danger of choosing it again, even against the clearest dictates of his own mind;

mind; and will call it happiness, against his own experience of its misery.

Every prodigal sinner is the emblem of that weak man, whom Seneca tells us of. "The poor creature was blind; but could never be persuaded that he was so. He would often ask to walk abroad, because the room he lived in was so dark." There is no darkness like that of a depraved will, and vicious inclinations: and no persons are so insensible of an evil choice, as they that are accustomed to be guilty of it, and, by ungoverned passions, have long continued in it.

3. To compleat the parallel I purposed at first to draw, let us compare the several signs and symptoms of a disordered mind, as they appear in the *external actions* of the man, in the natural, and in the moral life.

If we see a person, through any combustion of the animal spirits caused by some acute distemper, or by too great intenseness of thought and study, or by some sudden and violent passion; if, I say, we see him reduced to such a state, as to have no longer any command of himself; and discoursing and behaving in such a manner, as bespeaks him lost to all reason and manhood; we need not
much

much skill in physic, to pronounce what his case is.

If again, in the life of *business*, we observe a man heedless and unthoughtful amidst the tenderest concerns of his interest; rash and unguarded, where there ought to be the utmost caution; desperate in the weightiest matters, but solicitous and highly anxious about trivial ones; fierce and surly to those that would advise him well, and fond of the things that would certainly ruin him;---all these symptoms determine us at once, to give this person his proper character.

If now you would find another madness equal to this; what think you of the creature who runs on in vices, which his own natural sense, and conscience, and experience, tell him must terminate in his destruction! Who makes himself desperately secure in his vanities and debaucheries, while probably the miseries of the present life may be full in his view; or, at best, there is nothing but the short thread of life, that parts him from greater and more durable miseries; who despises the counsels of God, and of nature; laughs at the advice and example of wise and good men; and cannot be prevailed upon

upon to moderate his pleasures, though it would be the sure way to enjoy them the better; nor to live by reason, while he assumes to himself the title of a man?--- Would you call such a one by any other name, than that of the *Prodigal* in my text; "a man out of himself, and quite lost, unless he comes to himself again?"

And thus I hope that, to some of you at least, I may appear to have justified that description of spiritual madness, which the parable intended to give us in the character and conduct of this dissolute young man. The only reflection I shall draw from the whole is, to desire you will remark, with what propriety of language, with what justness of thought and expression, the Scriptures, in numberless other passages, have set forth the abandoned and woful condition of an habitual transgressor of God's holy laws. When, for example, they call it *blindness* and *darkness*; the blindness of the *mind*, the darkness of the *understanding*; are not the figures natural and exact? or do they rise at all higher, than the case admits of? When it is styled *stumbling* and *falling*, *wounds* and *bruises*, nay *sickness*

sickness and *death itself*; does any one of these metaphors carry any thing more in it, than what we are all witnesses of, in the rashness and confusion, the folly and inconsistency, the pain and vexation, so visible in a depraved conscience, and a wicked life!

Thus far the parable has led me to treat of vice as a *distemper*, which sinners wilfully bring upon their own *minds*. Let me conclude this first part, with the plain, but most affecting manner, wherein St. Paul has painted such a man, thus lamenting to himself the sad tumult he felt within his own breast:
“ that which I do, I allow not: for what I
“ would, that I do not: but what I hate,
“ that I do. To will is present with me;
“ but how to perform that which is good, I
“ find not. I am carnal, sold under sin,”
(enslaved, and enthralled to it) “ I find a law”
(an evil custom, much stronger than most laws) “ that, when I would do good, evil is
“ present with me. For I delight in the law
“ of God, after the inward man: but I see
“ another law in my members, warring a-
“ gainst the law of my mind, and bringing
“ me into captivity to the law of sin, and of
“ death.

“ death. O wretched man that I am!” And wretched indeed must be that life, and every circumstance of it, which depends upon the influences of such an unhappy state of mind!

But this confession, as it comes from the mouth and heart of the sinner himself, will afford sufficient matter for another discourse.

To God, only wise, &c.

And I thought, "O what a shame that I am!" And
I had never been so sad in my life, and every
day I was more and more depressed, until I
was almost dead. I was so weak that I could
not even get up from my bed. I was so
sick that I could not eat or drink. I was
so miserable that I thought of nothing but
death. I was so alone that I felt as if
I were in a desert. I was so lonely that
I felt as if I were in a prison. I was so
sad that I felt as if I were in a tomb.

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S E R M O N XII.

LUKE XV. 17.

And when he came to himself, he said; how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough, and to spare; and I perish with hunger!

WHEN I first read these words to you, as a fit subject to discourse upon; I took notice of the great beauty, and good instruction, contained in, and running through this whole parable of our blessed Saviour; the several important observations, and noble truths, that are to be drawn from the characters and actions therein so lively-represented. But out of all these, I confined myself to the consideration of *two* only, which the words of the text seemed more immediately to point out to us: namely,

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I. The

I. The sad effects of depravity and distraction, which a profligate course of life, and continued scenes of debauchery, will produce in the human mind. The prodigal is here painted as a person, that had all this while been beside himself, and was now coming to himself again.

II. The deplorable state and circumstances, to which such a man is reduced, even by his own confession and self-reflection, in his calmer and better thoughts: "how many
" hired servants of my father's have bread e-
" nough, and to spare; and I perish with
" hunger!"

The former of these heads I have already finished; in which I purposed to maintain a proper parallel, between a disorder'd state of mind, as it appears in the *natural* man, and in the *moral* one; or between the madness and distraction of the *brain*, and that of the *heart*, or conscience.

I come now to speak of this prodigal, as returning to some degree of cool reason, by his experience of the wretched effects of his riotous living; and taking a melancholy view of the hopeless condition his vices had brought him to. But, before I enter directly upon this

this second part, it will be of so great use to us to observe what was the *immediate* cause of reflection and reformation in this wild and thoughtless creature, that I cannot pass it by without a few remarks.

We here read, that the thing, which first opened his eyes, and drew these lamentable words of the text from his mouth, was *miser*y and *want*;---the woful change, which, partly by the natural course of his extravagancies, and partly by the just judgment of God, fell so hard upon him. It pleased God to send a famine upon the land, in which he had lived so profusely: and he had now deprived himself of what might have supported him under the calamity. A most wise, and indeed merciful dispensation of Divine Providence; whereby very often (perhaps generally speaking) the pains and sufferings even of the present life are seen closely annexed, as certain consequences, to habitual lewdness: by which many a person, hard to reclaim, but not quite irreclaimable, is brought back to just consideration, and timely repentance. Afflictions, when men are forced to see them as the fruits of their own vices, have a loud, and a most proper call;

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they

they cause a wicked man to read himself the lecture; the arguments are of his own making; the conviction comes home and strong upon him. When the indulgence of our fancies and passions, is felt to terminate in the want of the very necessaries of life; then a man (that can be made to think at all) will weigh the pleasures of sin in a true balance, will find how light they are, and set his wishes upon better. Whereas a continuance of ease and plenty, like too much heat in the body, must dissolve, and quite corrupt the heart of a sinful man: and none are in such hazard of utter ruin, as they that are suffered to be undisturbed, and healthy, and thriving, in their debaucheries. It carries them with a sail too full and stiff to be drawn in; the gale is too high to be resisted; it blows with that degree of confidence and presumption, that all conscience is silenced, and reason and duty can take no place. But when God thinks fit to turn the tables upon us, and to convince us of our folly, by miseries of our own procuring; then thought and reason begin to recover their natural power, and break in upon us; then conscience has liberty to plead her cause, and can tell

tell her errand without controul; so as that nothing but final and judicial hardness of heart, can quell her voice, and stifle her motions. There may perhaps, after all, be some tempers found callous enough to stand and brave it out, against all argument and conviction: (for what is it, that vice and lust, ambition and lewd desires, may not effect?) but, as these are spirits, that reason and religion have nothing to do with; so, it is to be hoped, they are but few. Though, be they ever so numerous, they are no exception against this wisdom of Providence, which thus provides a cure, wherewith to restore many a lost prodigal. And many, I trust, have and will, as *all may*, rightly understand, and rightly apply, this sharp but good remedy. So did our prodigal, in this parable: it brought him back to his father's house. So does the holy scripture furnish us with numbers of the like eminent instances and examples. It was the sight of misery, that brought the sons of Jacob to confess the injury they had done to their brother Joseph, and made them cry out, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." It was this that caused David to own, that "before he was afflicted, he

“went astray.” And the prophet spoke a general truth, worthy of the all-wise Providence: “when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.”

This then, I say, is the occasion and manner, in which many a vicious person is recovered and reformed: and happy are all they, who will seriously and timely lay hold of it! But, nevertheless, I must add one remark more, before I dismiss it: namely, that though the repentance of a returning sinner will find a sure acceptance with God, even if it takes its first rise from nothing better than the smart of his own follies; yet we ought to remember, that this is the lowest, the meanest principle of repentance; and that our acceptance and reward will be only proportionate to it. Though *he* may be happy, who repents upon this motive; yet there are *other* motives far more noble and valuable. For how much more manly is it to correct our errors by the pure and genuine dictates of reason; by the early workings of our own conscience; by reflecting on the nature of good and evil, on the authority, laws, and word of God;---how much

much better, I say, is it to amend our ways by these reflections, rather than by the mere experience of pain and punishment? In other words, how much more laudable is that reformation which proceeds from a sense of duty, than that which is procured by the smart of the rod? The *principle* of the one is more generous than that of the other: and the heart that is influenced by it, is consequently more worthy in itself, and more acceptable to *him* who knows the motives and merits of all hearts.

In the instance before us; how much more commendable would it have been for this poor prodigal to have resolved upon returning to his father and his home, while he had something still left, or when he had spent only half his fortune; instead of staying it out, till every penny was gone, and he was absolutely *driven* home by the terrors of that condition in which he now found himself, and in which I now come to consider him as a most lively image of all other profligate and debauched men. Let us then draw out the comparison, as the two cases, to be compared together, may lie; either in themselves considered, or with the several circum-

stances that serve to aggravate and imbitter the evil of each of them.

As much unhappiness as our present animal life is capable of, will consist in two things; --in a total want of the necessary support and comforts of it; and then in a positive suffering of *pain*, whether of body, or of mind, or of both. Thus far the condition of our present emblem, the prodigal, went. He had wasted all; was destitute of every thing, and in prospect of nothing. He had nothing before his eyes but death, at his present home; and as to friends to assist him from abroad, he could think of none, but such as, he must conclude, were eternally disgusted, and had finally discarded him. You may easily form to yourselves many particular circumstances (though not mentioned in the parable) whereby every thought of this wretched state was made more wretched upon him. He well knew, that all this calamity had no original *cause* but himself; that he had never wanted where to lay his head, but by foolishly forsaking his father's house; nor needed to have felt the pain of an hungry belly, but by wantonly despising the plenty of a full table. Whenever he remembered his
father,

father, it could not but be, with bitter reflections upon himself: and every want he felt, stung him with the memory of his ingratitude. And how could he call to mind the family he once belonged to; and picture to himself the brother, the servant, nay the very lowest hireling in *that* family, living in plenty, having bread enough, and to spare; and himself denied even the husks with which the swine were fed! But let us leave the figure, and take the things and characters represented by it.

There are not a few (there are too many) persons of extravagant lives, who reduce themselves, in the *literal* sense, and in their *temporal* concerns, to the situation here described. When either luxury has broken his fair fortunes, or unbridled lusts his health and constitution, a man *must* want; or, which is full as bad, be unable to enjoy the good that lies before him. And, no doubt, to these *literal* prodigals, it has often been a bitter ingredient in their cup of misery, while they are thinking what they *are*, that they are forced to remember what they once were, and what they might still have been.

In

In the moral life, the case will run even more than parallel. Wherein can consist the true pleasures of a moral and reasonable creature, either in the nature of things, or by the wise appointment of God, but in the regular exercise of rational powers, and moral endowments; in an understanding properly employed; in a will prudently directed; and in passions and affections well governed, and fixed upon worthy objects; in keeping the mind up to the lovely standard, by which it was created; in imitating and obeying its maker, whom it is able to know, to serve, to hope in, to depend upon, and to be happy in for ever? This is virtue; this is religion; and this must be felicity, if any such thing there be! This is to be of *God's house*; to be his *sons*; to be *maintained* by him, and sure of a full *portion* from him. Change now the scene; and what is the opposite to all this, but a life devoted to low and vicious indulgencies? What is running into excesses of profligacy and sensuality, but 'leaving our heavenly father's house,' 'wasting and consuming our precious portion of reason and light and grace,' and "feeding upon husks" in the worst of all senses?

The

The condition of the *literal* prodigal may be supposed to respect the sufferings of the present life only; but the *moral* of it looks into another, and a more lasting one. It is no easy matter, I well know, to bring some frantic and lewd creatures to believe, especially to *consider*, the consequences of not being provided for that state: and they will go on to riot away their talents, till they come to "feed among the swine,"---to be utterly lost to all that virtue of mind, that peace of conscience, and prospect of the divine favour, with which they see good men so easy, so calm, and so happy. And when *this* is the case, and the *last* of all God's *present* arguments fails to reclaim them; there is nothing left, but the judgment of that *future* day, wherein we shall all be convinced, either of the blessedness of a righteous life, or the dreadful poverty of a sinful one: when they, who have debased themselves to live upon the vile and vulgar pleasures, shall have their very husks taken from them: their lusts will forsake them, and the taste of all their vices leave them: and *then* they will indeed feel the want of all those virtues and graces, that should qualify them to partake of the enjoyments

enjoyments of another, the only remaining life. This is the most terrible of all wants, the worst and lowest of all poverty!

Whoever therefore among you, have any notion, any belief at all, that thus it will *one day* be, with every unrepenting sinner; let me earnestly forewarn you, how every reflection you can *then* make, will serve only to heap up the measure of your unhappiness! If you look upon *yourselves*, *there* you will see nothing, but the true, the only authors of all this beggary, this endless misery. If you turn your sorrowful eyes upward to *God*, you will behold *him*, who was once your tender father, now your all-powerful and just judge. If, again, you think upon *other men*, you will meet with numerous objects, that will sharpen the smart of every sore, and the remembrance of which will put fresh gall into your cup. Those meek and humble Christians, whom you once overlooked and scorned in the pride of your hearts; those sober and serious men, whom you laughed at, and called fools, in the height of your gaiety; those good and pious friends, who were your jest; and the virtuous, you made the subject of your wit and raillery;---what would you *now* give
to

to exchange places with the meanest of them all! Would you not yield up your whole world of carnal delights, to be but as one of the "*hired servants*" in the everlasting family of that father, who created you his children, and redeemed you to be his sons?

Give me leave now to draw a short exhortation from the several topics I have been discoursing upon. And,

I. Whenever we are pressed with any of the evils of life, but especially those troubles and afflictions which we have reason to believe are the just recompence of our own indiscretion and vices; and still particularly the pains of an evil conscience; let us learn to make a prudent and pious improvement of them. Let us not be froward under them, nor stubborn to bear them; until they increase, and become quite intolerable: nor let us repine, or sink, or despair, under the rod of God, but look up to the kind and righteous hand that hath appointed it. Think it a most wholesome correction, and a merciful provision of God and of nature, that you should be led to the desire of wisdom, by the pain and disgrace of having been a fool. And then the stroke that now grieves you, the
terror

terror that now affrights you, will tend to cure, and to reform, and to save you.

But then, 2. Let this consideration be as *speedy*, and as *early*, under your sufferings, as possible. All delays to heal the mind, exactly answer to neglecting diseases of the body. The humours gather, both in number, and in strength; which, of necessity, heightens the difficulty of the cure. So your evil habits, the more time you give them, the more mischievous you make them; and when at length you come to be truly sensible of them, with the more guilt and horror will they oppress you. Add to this, the remark I just now made;--that 'if ever a man *does* recover himself from a long series of debauchery, or 'iniquity; he must (generally at least) recover to a state no better or higher, than is 'proportionate to his repentance. He will, 'he *must*, be still a loser, so far, and so long, 'as he has been a deliberate sinner.' Whereas if you will consider, and return to yourself, and to your right mind, when only some part of your spiritual estate is wasted; the rest of it will be a fund, upon which to begin a new work, new grace, and new hopes of mercy. But read the case of our prodigal, here in the

the parable! who stayed away, till the last farthing was funk. What view, what hope, could *he* have, even in the bowels of a father? His conscience would not suffer him to think of being restored to the capacity of a *son* any more: the utmost he dared to beg was, "make me as one of thy hired servants." And yet even *this mercy* those persons can have no ground to hope for, who never return to God, till life, as well as grace, is all spent. They do not answer to the figure of this prodigal: for *he* came home with youth and health and strength, to *work* in his father's house. But in old age, or a death-bed repentance, all *work* is over; all faculties for reforming life, and conquering lusts, and treading the painful stage of virtue, are lost and dead---the sinner cannot pretend so much as to do the lowest office of an *hired servant*.

To sum up all; God is that supreme father, from whose righteous laws and commands whoever of us goes wilfully and long astray, is the wretched prodigal here represented. Whenever *he* is pleased to recall us home, by his chastisements upon us, or by the warnings of our own consciences; to refuse that gracious call, is to add a fresh load
to

to our misery, and to double our guilt. But if, at the seasonable and appointed hour of forgiveness, we will "arise and go;" *then it* will be to a father indeed; even to the "father of mercies, and the God of all comfort."

To him be glory and praise and dominion for ever and ever!

SERMON

S E R M O N XIII.

P S A L M cxix. 106.

*I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will
keep thy righteous judgments.*

IF you carefully observe the unusual length of this Psalm, with the variety of things contained in it; you will find it to be a most pious composition of a person, who had trodden the stage of human life in all its parts; in all the turns of prosperity and adversity;—who had gone through many changes in his own conduct, and practised some eminent virtues, with a mixture of great blemishes and failings. Such a man was king David. He had enjoyed the glories of a crown, and tasted the sweets of power and honour and peace. On the other side, he had felt the heavy hand of conquering enemies, and the stings of dishonour and troubles in his own

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family. He had run in God's true ways; and stumbled and fallen; and risen again, to repeat that same good course. When all this had passed, he seems to have taken the opportunity of time and leisure, to draw up all these things into a serious and regular contemplation; to be a profitable lesson to men of all times and circumstances, and teach them how to speak, how to think, how to act, with wisdom and integrity, in every condition of life. To which purpose, you will see this psalm divided into twenty-two parts, answering to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet: and every one of these parts conveys to us some matter either of devout prayer, reflection, or instruction, tending to improve and establish us in true religion and virtue.

In one part, the pious are encouraged, and the profane rebuked; in another, the diligent are commended, and negligence is reprov'd: in some, there is comfort to them that are in affliction, and grave and wholesome advice to such as live in ease and pleasure. In short, God, and his divine providence, and his righteous laws, and the duties which mankind owe him, are the arguments of this fine hymn.

The

The words of the text are given us as an instance of the first and leading requisite towards a religious life;---of that temper, and disposition of heart, which is to be the foundation of all the prospect a man can have of passing through the world with innocence and a good conscience. This temper and disposition is *religious resolution*, or ‘a previous settled determination of mind, to be guided by the light of truth and of duty.’ And this is what I at present purpose to discourse upon; and with that view, to shew you,

I. The nature of a truly religious resolution, with the principal marks and properties of it.

II. The great use and absolute necessity of it towards a virtuous life, in order to our future happiness.

First then: Let us consider what are the characters and properties of a truly religious resolution.

The service which God requires of us, is a *reasonable* service. None but such a one, can have any merit in itself, or be acceptable to *him* who hath endued us with understanding to know him, and a freedom of will to

obey him. Reason is that power of the soul, whereby we are distinguished from the animal creation around us: and to direct our conduct by the exercise of it, is our proper ornament, as well as our duty. Whatever we do or design without, or contrary to, *her* advice, may indeed be too often *called* religion, but it really begins and ends in indecent humour and fancy and deceit. And hence it will be evident, that the first good quality necessary to make a resolution truly religious is, that it be *deliberate*;--that it be the result of a right understanding, and mature consideration, of the subjects or things we determine upon. Some persons appear to found all the virtue of obedience, and all obligation to religious duty, upon the mere will and authority of God; without much regard to the *reasonableness* of the precepts supposed to be enjoined by him, or a conviction in *us* of their fitness and excellency. But surely this is to lay a foundation too narrow for the building. Man, as a moral agent, and a compound of reason and passion, is to be influenced, and wrought to action, by motives drawn from each of those principles. Authority, and bare command, have *their* chief effect

effect upon our hopes and our fears, which arise from an apprehension of some good or evil to befall us at the pleasure and appointment of a superior. Whereas a rational persuasion of the intrinsic goodness of the thing commanded, lays *its* hold on our nobler part; binds the *true man*, and keeps him to his duty, not only from the fear of transgressing it, but from the admiration and esteem of it. To move an intelligent creature, without beginning the motion upon its *understanding*, is to act upon it in a mechanical way. The best and strongest aversion to what is evil, is derived from a clear sight of its natural baseness and deformity: and how can a man be supposed to have a real love of virtue, till he first be shewn her amiable qualities?

I verily believe I may appeal to the judgment and experience of every thinking person, whether mens neglecting to use their understanding in matters of religion, be not the principal occasion of most, if not of all the false and superstitious piety, that has so long and generally prevailed. The far greater part even of the more corrupted world, always did, and ever will, make some pretences, form some resolutions, and very often

shew much zeal, about religion and worship and devotion. But what a lamentable thing is it to observe, upon what wretched *objects* all this concern has been spent; and how, for want of knowing and considering what the substance is, the shadow and the modes and the outward forms have been taken in the room of it! A set of senseless words, in an *unknown* tongue, is called *prayer*; and pilgrimages, and fool's errands to a Saint (who in all probability was no saint at all) is named Christian *devotion*.

So again; abundance of people may be resolute in their *faith*: yet in some, that faith is nothing but a presumptuous reliance on the merits of Christ, or on absolute election that has no respect to inward virtue; while in others, it is mere *credulity*, a blind and lazy assent to the opinions and doctrines of *men*, instead of a rational and careful regard to the essential truths of the everlasting Gospel.

In like manner, how numerous are they who pretend to the great virtue of *charity*: but, because they never took the pains to enquire into the religious and scriptural notion of that word, what a narrow-minded, what a partial and selfish thing do they make of it
in

in their practice ! They will confine it entirely to one certain scheme, and not suffer it to extend beyond the limits of their own party : they will do good to those, whom *they* have determined to be of God's true church ; to all others, they know of no such duty as universal benevolence ; but, in the zeal of an injudicious mind, will even persecute the body for the good of the soul. No more instances can be requisite to shew you, how happily the text has instructed us, where we are to lay the first and grand foundation of a religious resolution : " We are to fix it upon "*God's righteous judgments.*" Study therefore, and endeavour to understand, those sacred laws and commandments : view their beauty : weigh well the value and importance of the virtues, which religion recommends to you ; and then your resolution to observe and practise them, will carry in it the rest of those genuine marks and properties I am now farther to describe.

2dly then ; " a truly good resolution is "*calm, steady, and constant.*" And so it will seldom or never fail to be, if it be the effect of that deliberate judgment, and knowledge of the divine laws, which I have been speak-

ing of. Sound reason, and a serious repeated consideration of the wisdom that shines in all the commands of Heaven, will set the heart of man upon its firmest basis. It will raise his affections and resolutions above the uncertainty of humour, and the winds of temptation. It will not suffer him to be in the number of those double-minded men, who are "unstable in all their ways;" who are religious by fits and starts; whose devotion is no better than a short-lived rapture, a transient heat of fancy, kindled perhaps by the reading or hearing some pathetic discourse, and then as presently cooled by the first invitation to sin, or forgotten in the merriment of the next idle companions. A really pious intention of mind is like the *Lord's voice*; it does not shew itself in rumbling mighty winds, but in the "still small voice" of reason, and sedate understanding. It is as the fire, that burns inwardly and slowly, but steadily and lastingly; and does not blaze out and expire in sudden and violent flames.

Let me add one particular character more, under this head. Generally speaking, the resolution of a truly good man is conducted with

with prudence, *modesty*, and *silence*. There are indeed times and occasions, that will call upon a man to declare and display his pious resolutions. Example may be needful; to stem a tide of iniquity: and, for the support and countenance of a good cause, it may be expedient for us not only to keep the true light in ourselves, but to "let it shine before men." Yet, I say, in the main, unaffected virtue is a modest thing: and the better men are, the less noisy is their piety; and discovers itself in actions, that have a far better grace, than the biggest words, and the loudest pretensions.

3dly. Another essential property of a religious resolution is, that it must be *uniform* and *universal*. It must include *every* duty, and have respect to *all* the divine commands, as being all necessary to qualify us for the favour of God, and for the happiness of another world.

This same Psalmist, who tells us in the text that he had determined to "keep God's "righteous judgments," explains himself, in another verse, as to the *extent* of that laudable design: "I shall not be ashamed," says he, "when I have respect unto *all* thy commandments."

"mandments." And the *reason* is obvious, why it *must* be so. For real goodness can be guilty of no one habitual sin: and the laws of God are all enforced by the same authority, have all one common object in view, and are inseparably connected together towards the same end. So that to think of serving your Maker in some points, but not in others; or of being good in some respects, but not in others;---is to destroy the very principle, upon which alone you can be good at all. There is indeed such a thing, as *exchanging* one vice for *another*: as when one unlawful pleasure grows less agreeable to your constitution, becomes too expensive for your pocket, or too dangerous to your reputation:---in such a case, you will probably leave it, because you cannot keep it. But do not let this be called religious resolution. For, if other sins still maintain their ground, or if new ones succeed in the place of old ones, what a poor change is this! You may be said, it is true, to be a sinner in a new dress, but not to be altered for the better: you have gotten a new master, but you are still the same slave.

In

In fine: the observance of some duties, with an allowed and repeated violation of others, is exactly like the charity of savages and bigots I just now mentioned,---shut up within the little circle of a few kindred and countrymen. As this is far short of the character of a *man*, so is that of the virtue of a *good man*.

4thly. The last thing I shall name, as a certain quality of a truly pious intention, is; that it will seldom come to good effect, unless it be *timely* and *speedy*:---by which I do not mean that it be *hasty*, (for I have guarded against *that* already) but that it must immediately follow the conviction the mind is under, after sufficient knowledge, and due consideration. To be convinced of what is right is one thing, and to act with vigor upon such conviction is another. God knows, the one is too often found, where the other is wanting. Now there is hardly a grosser affront to be put upon our rational mind, and upon the God who bestowed that mind upon us, than not to pursue the light and evidence which *He* has afforded it. To be satisfied of the wisdom and necessity of living in sobriety; to own the excellency of virtue; and yet
not

not to set about the actual reformation of our vices ; is either to demonstrate to *Him*, and to the whole world, that we do not think as we pretend to think, or else to offer the rudest insult to our own consciences. It is possible indeed, that even a sincere resolution may be sometimes broken and baffled for the present, by some violent surprise, or some unusual temptation of life : but then it may, and will, be recovered again. But the *general truth*, I fear is ; that they, who delay and put off the execution of their good purposes, did not think of them enough, nor lay them well, at first. It was only a present fit, it was no settled resolution, that affected them. For the mind of man is not naturally a capricious and irregular agent. Regular conduct will always flow from mature and serious consideration : and wise and upright action will be the genuine fruit of an honest heart, and a good understanding.

Upon the whole then ; whoever resolves no farther than this ; that ‘ he will repent, and ‘ live well, some time or other, he knows not ‘ when ; ’ appears never yet to have learnt what repentance is, nor to have any just idea what it is to live at all.

II. Having

II. Having thus briefly described the nature and properties of the good resolution recommended in the text; I proceed to speak something of the great use and necessity of it towards a virtuous life, in order to our future happiness.

The undoubted spring of all our actions, whether they be good or evil, is the previous state and inclination of the mind, either governing itself by sober thoughts and clear apprehensions of things, or else let loose to the wild misrule of passion and vicious fancies. He that has once sedately *resolved*, has taken a great step towards his intended work: whereas not to be prepared with any defence at all, against the hazards and temptations of the world you live in; is to be so far from any prospect of a *good end*, that it gives no sight of any *beginning* of virtue. It is an infallible maxim with respect to your minds, both in this state and the next:--“every man will find himself ‘what he makes himself.’” If you will not manage your heart, as the prudent husbandman does the ground he is to sow; if you neglect to cultivate and manure it with rational notions, and proper resolutions; it will yield you no good harvest. If you suffer ignorance,
and

and evil habits, to get root, continue, and spread in it; you have poisoned your soil: nothing that is wholesome will grow *there*. Try the truth of this fatal danger, by a certain rule; either by the nature of the thing, or by what in fact and experience most commonly befalls those, who either never make any good resolutions, or defer and delay them. Whenever you see the plain obligation to your duty, and feel the conviction of it; every day, every hour, you suppress such conviction, what violence are you doing to your own best judgment! How will this, by sure though slow degrees, wear out the fair impression; render you more and more easy and thoughtless and indifferent; till that ease, which might be tolerable and recoverable at first, shall end in absolute hardness of heart! Vice, as far as it is indulged, and permitted to gain the ascendancy, is both a powerful, and a deceitful thing. Custom will persuade you to call it *pleasure*, though it brings far above the balance of its weight in *pain*, in its consequences: like those anodyne and opium draughts, that are always tempting the patient to encrease the quantity, till there is hardly any quiet to be had without them, and the sweet indolence

lence of a few hours, is dearly paid for in the ruin of the constitution they pretended to relieve;--all for want of resolving well, to keep within moderate bounds in the use of them.

Behold, moreover, this deceitfulness of sin in all those, whose resolutions are weak and faint, and shifted off from day to day! with what poor pretences, with what false and foolish hopes, they will suffer themselves to be decoyed! Sometimes fetching those hopes from reasoning on the mercies and compassion of God; with a total forgetfulness of him, as a wise *governor*, and righteous *judge*, of the moral world. Nay, observe how Christians, delaying and deluding Christians, will lay hold of the broken reeds, even of *scripture* passages and examples! One alledging the remarkable salvation of the "thief upon the cross;" without being able to produce a single circumstance, that might favour *his* case; though many there might be, and most assuredly were, though to *us* unknown. Another you will hear pleasing himself, that whatever time he has shamefully mispent, yet *his* may at last be the case of the "labourers in the vine-yard;" and he may be accepted in his repentance, though it begins at the *eleventh* hour:

hour: all this while quite overlooking that part of the parable, which tells him, that those poor men *could not* come sooner, because they were not *called* sooner. So then, if any one of *us* can truly say, he has never yet been *called upon*, by his own conscience, by the word of God, by his Ministers, or by his Spirit; *then*, but not till then, he may have the privilege of these *Gentiles*, and be taken into God's vineyard at *his* eleventh hour.

Finally; even that *prodigal son*, who left his father, and spent all he had, and was graciously received and forgiven at his return;--even *his* example, I say, ought by no means to flatter the hopes, but much rather to alarm the fears, of all such persons, who postpone their resolutions to the late hour of life. For, though he came home with no part of his *portion* remaining; yet he brought back *youth* and *health* and *strength* to labour in the service of his father: which causes a wide difference between *him*, and those old sinners, whom age has quite worn out, and debauchery made decrepit, and a sick and last bed has deprived of all ability of serving God, or of being useful in their generation.

In

In one plain word. Our common reason; the nature, shortness, and uncertainty of life; all human prudence, and the whole word of God; warn us all of this interesting truth; that 'to form steady and good resolutions can never possibly be done too soon, but easily may be, and often is, begun too late.'

Take with you therefore, and keep in constant remembrance, the exhortation of the wise preacher: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest."

In the plain world. Our common teachers
the natural honesty, and uncertainty of life,
all human frailties, and the whole word of
God, presents all of this interest, yet truth,
that to form history and good resolutions can
never possibly be long too soon, but easily
may be, and often is, begun too late.
I take with you therefore, and keep in con-
stant remembrance, that exhortation of the
wise preacher: "Whosoever thy hand find-
eth to do, do it with thy might: for there
is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor
strength in the grave whither thou goest."

S E R M O N XIV.

2 CORINTHIANS V. II.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.

THESSE words will call every serious person that has any regard to the sense and truth of Scripture, or to his own final safety and happiness;---they will call him, I say, to a very solicitous enquiry into the two principal points contained in them.

I. What the Apostle means by this “*terror of the Lord;*” and upon what account it is so styled.

II. What dispositions of mind, what conduct and behaviour, the belief and assurance of it ought, in all reason, to produce in him.

And, I. Sometimes in the scripture language, the *temporal* judgments and calamities which befall men in the *present* life, and are

inflicted by the providential hand of *God*, are named his *terrors*. And the *miracles* likewise, wrought by his divine power or command, because they were designed to impress the obstinate opposers of divine truth with reverential fear, or at least to rouse them to greater *attention* of mind;--*these* are also wont to be set forth under the same character. Thus Job, in his agony of affliction, says, "the *terrors* of God do set themselves in array against me." And, in the 26th chapter of Leviticus, God threatened to smite the rebellious Israelites with a *terror*, that is, with a *present* judgment or punishment. So David, when he lay under the chastisement of his sins, "thy *terrors*," says he, "have I suffered with a troubled mind." In the other acceptation, the *miracles* which Moses wrought for the conviction of the Egyptians, are called the "mighty hand, and the great *terror*," which God shewed by him in the land of Egypt. But St. Paul, in the passage before us, had neither of these meanings in his particular view. He is speaking here of the honour of the Christian Ministry, and of his own integrity in the discharge of it; and, from thence, of the joyful expectation, and

and sure hope, which both *he*, and all sincere Christians had, of the glorious rewards of another life, “when this earthly house of
“their tabernacle shall be dissolved.” And of this future recompence every wicked man, he says, as well as every good one, is to partake: “for we must *all* appear before the
“judgment-seat of Christ; that *every one*
“may receive the things done in his body,
“according to that he hath done, whether it
“be good or evil.” And then follows the text, as the moral improvement which he makes of that great truth: “knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade
“men.”

The future universal judgment is represented either as a matter of *terror*, or of *comfort*; with respect to the different sorts of persons concerned in it. To the virtuous and upright part of mankind, even the heavenly pomp and grandeur of the appearance, the majesty of the judge, and the splendor of the whole angelic retinue, will occasion no terrible amazement, nor give them any fear or affrightment. You read indeed, that when God appeared at *Mount Sinai*, the more innocent as well as the guilty Israelites were laid

under insupportable consternation. The best, in common with the worst of them, were forced to cry out to Moses; "Go *thou* near, "and hear all the words of God; but let not "us hear the voice of the Lord our God any "more, lest we die." But this will not be the case, when the Saviour of good men shall call *them* forth, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God. Their faith and hope, their innocence and good conscience, will enable them to behold that sight, and to hear that celestial voice, with joy and exultation. And so the scriptures of the New Testament always represent it. For true Christians are said to "love his appearing." And it is described, not as an horrible, but as a "glorious appearing of the "great God." And we are assured, that when HE shall appear, the righteous are to make a *part* of that appearance--"then shall "ye also," says St. Paul, "appear with him "in glory." To men of contrary qualities and practices, the day of judgment must be the cause of quite contrary apprehensions, of quite opposite effects. And as *they* were the persons who wanted arguments of *terror* and *fear*, to stir them up to that consideration of
mind,

mind, which reason and a generous sense of duty, through their own wilful depravity, could not bring them to; it is remarkable with what propriety the holy scriptures have set forth the circumstances of this great day of accounts, so as to make the very passions of men become assistants to their reason, and to make them begin to think and act by the lower principles, in order to raise their hearts to the better and higher motives. The image under which it is generally pictured, is that of a *Judge*, coming in such solemnity, and proceeding in his court of judicature with such justice, equity, and righteous terror against all incurable offenders, as is most wisely adapted to strike the mind with awe, and induce us timely to prepare for it. "The Son of Man," says our blessed Saviour, "shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him; and before him shall be gathered all nations." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God," says St. Paul. And again; "The Lord himself shall descend from Heaven, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God."

And St. John, with still more affecting circumstances, and more moving figures of speech: "I saw the dead, small and great," (both high and low, not one soul omitted) "stand before God: and the books were
"opened, and the dead were judged out of
"the things which were written in the
"books;" (that is, God will lay open all the actions of men as perfectly and as punctually, as if he had them all written down with pen and ink) "and whosoever was not found
"written in the book of life, was cast into
"the lake of fire." The tragedy goes on-- before his presence "the heavens departed
"as a scroll when it is rolled together. And
"every mountain and island were removed
"out of their places. And the kings of the
"earth, and the great men, and the rich men,
"and every bond man, and every free man" (all ranks of dishonest, oppressive, and profligate men) "hid themselves in the dens, and
"in the rocks; and said to the mountains
"fall on us, and hide us from the face of him
"that sitteth on the throne: for the great
"day of his wrath is come, and who shall
"be able to stand?"

The

The only use I would at present make of such descriptions as these, is, to observe to you, how carefully and completely the religion of Christ has provided every man with arguments of duty; how it has fenced and surrounded us with considerations that are suited to every disposition and capacity. The generous and sober and thoughtful are elevated to virtue by the love of God, and the mercies of Christ; the slower and heavier tempers are actuated and spurred on, both by hopes, and by fears; and even the most hardened and thoughtless of all, have enough to awaken them into a better mind. God has done every thing on *his* part, that can be sufficient to shew him a vigilant lawgiver, and a gracious Saviour, as well as a just judge: and both his promises and his terrors will leave every impenitent sinner destitute of all plea, and all excuse.

II. The second point I purposed to consider was, “ what sentiments and principles, “ what conduct and behaviour, the serious “ belief of this final judgment ought in all “ reason to produce in us.”

The last words of the text, “ we persuade “ men,” may be understood two ways. They may

may be taken as a *question*, “do we persuade men?” exactly agreeing with St. Paul’s use of the same words, in his epistle to the Galatians; “do I now persuade men, or God; or “do I seek to please men?” In this view, the word we render *persuade*, would signify to court the friendship, to seek the favour and good opinion of the *world*, by accommodating ourselves and our actions to its taste and humour, for sinister and private ends. And then the sense of the text will be, that the belief of a future judgment as revealed in the scriptures, should raise every Christian, but especially every *Minister of Christ*, above the low artifices of aiming at a popular character by disguising the truth, and of acting the hypocrite only to get a little short-lived reputation. The effect of it ought to be the very reverse: it should make him speak and act with integrity and an open heart, with a love of truth, and an ingenuous desire to be in the sight of God what he would appear to be in the eyes of his fellow creatures. But if we take the words as an *affirmation*, according to our translation; this will enlarge the sense into a vast variety of important articles:---
‘knowing this dreadful truth to some, this
‘delightful

‘delightful truth to others, we endeavour to
‘persuade them all:’--We have the strong-
est possible motives to persuade them to the
practice of every virtue that will render this
day of judgment a day of infinite joy to them;
that will qualify them to receive their return-
ing Saviour with triumphant hearts, and look
upon their judge with an hope full of im-
mortality; and to dissuade them from the
habit of every vice, from every sinful and ex-
travagant course of life, that will make this
day of accounts a terror and an astonishment
to their guilty souls, that will call back every
act of transgression afresh into their memory,
and create in them inexpressible confusion at
the appearance of a judge, who, their own
consciences tell them, will do whatever is
right, and revenge whatever is basely wrong.

There is not time for me to expatiate upon
all the particulars of our conduct, that ought
to be regulated by a due apprehension of the
account we are to give up at this last tribunal.
No doubt it would be easy to shew, how uni-
formly and universally it ought to govern
them all. But I must confine myself to a few
general instances, that may perhaps be of the
most immediate and signal benefit.

1. And

1. And I shall begin with one, which, as I said just now, is suggested to us by the former acceptation of the text ;--namely, ' that a sincere belief of the future judgment should set every man far above the vanity of building a religious character upon external shews and formal appearances of sanctity, such as hypocrites put on, to cover their guilt, or gain the false applauses of *men*.' A good name is indeed a most desirable, and a most useful thing: it yields more satisfaction than riches can afford, and contains in it all the honour that is truly valuable. Besides, it is a good name that gives a man influence and authority, that sets all his virtues in their most advantageous light, and enables him to do the highest services to those about him. But to think of erecting this fair fabrick upon so base a foundation as mere pretences to piety, and empty shadows of honesty, is in itself the most ridiculous attempt; and, whenever the discovery comes to be made, will appear the most criminal one. When the judgment of God shall take place, there will no room be left for art or concealment: every thing will be laid open; and nothing, in all nature, will look so naked, and so shameful,

shameful, as an hypocrite; the man who, of all others, has been the abuser of *men*, and the affronter of *God*! What a spectacle to all the earth will those Scribes and Pharisees be, with their high titles of *Rabbi* and *Master*; who could *persuade* their whole nation to esteem them the greatest of the sons of Abraham; when it shall be demonstrated that *they* had so little of the *faith* of Abraham--- that they were indeed those very sons of Be-lial, who, by pride and lust, “rejected the “counsel of God against themselves,” and “by wicked hands crucified their own Lord “of Life!” What a figure will those formalists, those zealots and bigots in the *Christian* church, make; who once had the cunning to get themselves stiled the “holy men of God,” and canonized for saints in Heaven; when they shall be stript bare, and be exposed for no better than deceivers of weak *men* upon earth! Surely he that will bestow a single thought upon this awful day, can never conceive it to be worth his while to wear a mask for a few years: and whoever remembers that *Christ* is to be his judge, will presently see (what no words can paint) the folly, as well as iniquity, of imposing upon his fellow Christians!

2. If

2. If you have any real belief of a future judgment, let me persuade you to 'keep it as your perpetual restraint from the commission of all *secret* and *private* sins.' There are probably many persons, who, though they retain an inclination to several vices, are yet afraid of the *reproach*, and have an aversion to the *scandal*, of them. Reputation carries considerable weight, where reason and duty have little or none at all. Now this betrays great weakness of mind: and the remedy to cure it, is to consider what we are *to be*, as well as what we *are*. He that dares to contrive and execute any ill design, only because no eyes are upon him, strangely forgets the day, wherein all eyes are to have a sight of his deformity. The man, who will venture to sin in private, wants a most essential part of the duty of *reverence*: such a man has no reverence of *himself*; and the want of that will, in a short time, and if a strong temptation should offer, lead him to disregard what *others* think of him. Moreover; when God is forgotten in the closet, you are in great danger of bidding him defiance in the streets, and the market-place. Whereas, if you would often call to mind, that the very judge, before

before whose dread tribunal you are one day to stand, is now a witness of all you are doing; you would tremble to gratify a lust in the secret chamber, as much as you would to proclaim it upon the house top.

3. If you be indeed convinced of this judgment to come, let me exhort you, whoever you are, to resignation and contentment in the circumstances of life in which Providence has placed you. Our present life has a great variety of trials; and I well know it is hard enough with many persons. But though you may not find an immediate deliverance, you may and ought to reap great consolation from the argument we are upon. Bethink yourself, that the disposal of all things in this world, comes from the hand of that same Lord, who is to be your judge in another; and that no condition can be so bad, no case so uneven, but what *he* is able, and will be certain, to rectify. Remember there are duties belonging to every situation, and to every person; and that if you fulfil your part with courage and fidelity, you will hereafter find as perfect goodness in your Judge, and feel as perfect satisfaction within your own breast, from the sufferings you have endured,

endured, and the reward of your patience and piety; as the wealthiest and noblest man shall do, from the discharge of all the virtues of his higher station.

4. If you fix your thoughts, like a true believer, on this grand day of reckoning; you will correct your whole temper of mind, as well as your actions, by the sense and expectation of it. You will never be proud, never oppress any that are beneath you; since the day is coming, when "the proud shall be rewarded after their deserving, and the haughtiness of man shall be brought low." You will seek no redress of injuries, by malice, or revenge; since vengeance belongeth to that judge only, "who standeth at the door;" but you will be gentle, merciful, and forgiving, as you hope for mercy at that seat of mercy and judgment: and "when the chief shepherd shall appear, you shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away."

5. I have but one word of advice more! Let no vicious man give himself any false comfort, from an imagination, that 'this tremendous day is still at a vast *distance* from him.' For what is *any distance* of time to that

that God who has all time, even an eternity of time, in his own hands! A wise man, in looking forward to a great event, will not so much regard the time *when* it will happen, as the certainty that it *will* happen. Besides, how far off is every man's *own* day of judgment? Why, the hour of his *death* fixes and determines it, as to *him*. He, that moment, sees and feels what it will be. His own heart, and habitual frame of mind, either sink him with the apprehensions of the terrors to come, or transport him with the prospect of that happy state which will know no end.

To God, only wise, &c.

way of their happy fate which will know no
 end to come or transient pain with the pro-
 duce him with the approbation of the ear-
 nest and radiant beams of a true, eter-
 nal and true what it will be. His own
 determination as to him, his own man-
 ner? Why, for none of his own time and
 how far off a every man's own day of judg-
 ment, as the certainty that it will happen, as
 much regard the time when it will happen,
 looking forward to a great event, will not be
 of time, in his own hands. A wise man, in
 that God who has all time, even an eternity

20 Oct 1944

SERMON XV.

MATTHEW ix. 13.

But go ye, and learn what that meaneth; I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.

THESE words are twice used by our blessed Saviour, in answer to the ignorant and malicious cavils of the Pharisees at his behaviour in his ministry. In the passage before us, he had invited a certain publican, named Matthew, to be his follower. And upon the man's ready and ingenuous compliance with the call, our Lord went to his house, and freely conversed with the publicans, and others who were there met together: whence these captious men presently took occasion to accuse him of the scandal of keeping bad company, and "being a friend of publicans and sinners."

Again, in the twelfth chapter of this same gospel, you find him walking with his disciples through some fields of ripe corn: and his followers, pressed with hunger, plucked some of the corn, and began to eat it. And, because it happened to be a sabbath-day, these same accusers of the Master now fall foul upon his Disciples, for the high crime of violating the sabbath. Our Saviour, in both places, vindicates his conduct by the two strongest arguments in the world; by the reason and nature of the thing, and by their own scriptures, the allowed word of God. "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick: I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." People in general, says our blessed Master, are bound in prudence not to run into infected houses; but a *physician* is excepted, by necessity, and by his office. In like manner it is a *moral* duty, not to associate with *sinners*, and evil company; but a *teacher*, who is to *reform* them, *must* be amongst them, and converse with them. So again; the *sabbath* is a day of rest, and even of restraint from labour: but yet, doing on that day what necessity requires, or the immediate

mediate wants of our neighbour call for, is not breaking the sabbath, but keeping it in the best manner. "For the sabbath," says he, "was made for man; and not man for the sabbath." That is, common reason tells you, that man was not created on purpose to observe certain days and times, and outward forms and ceremonies of worship; but those times and forms were appointed for the use of man, and are to be observed as the tempers, occasions, and circumstances of men may at any time require. Lastly, (argues this divine moralist) what was David guilty of, when he took the consecrated bread out of the tabernacle, to supply the urgent necessities of himself and his soldiers? Or what do you think of your prophet Hosea, who tells you that God "will have mercy, and not sacrifice?" Go therefore, and learn to understand your own sacred scriptures; and then you will know what true religion is, and what it is to transgress the laws of it.

There is nothing more common in the scripture writings, than to find religious duties divided into two parts; the moral, or that which is properly virtue, and is indis-

penfably required of all men, in all ages, and of all nations; and the pofitive, exterior, and ceremonial part. Thefe are described in very different characters: they are never confounded one with the other, but are constantly and carefully diftinguifhed. The fum and fubftance of either of them, is generally fet forth by fome eminent branch and property of it. Thus the external part of the Jewish religion is called *facrifice, burnt facrifce, incenfe, treading God's courts*, and the like. But the effential and univerfal religion is graced with the fuperior titles of *mercy, juftice, righteoufnefs, obeying the voice of God*---obeying it in the nobleft fenfe, and in duties of the higheft importance. I fhall have occafion to fhew this in feveral fcriptures afterwards: I obferve it *now*, only to give you the general diftinction, that may lead you to the main fenfe of the text; namely, that God's choofing or delighting in mercy, means his being pleafed with religion as it denotes internal habits and real acts of goodnefs, not with the mere ritual fervices fignified here by the word *facrifice*.

But, for a more particular explanation of the text, and of the doctrine conveyed in it,

we

we must take notice of the *manner and terms* in which it is expressed---“I will have mercy,” says God, “and *not* sacrifice.” In modern language, this seems to be a declaration, that God had no regard at all, to the outward offices, and outward duties, of religious worship. But, in the eastern and scriptural way of speaking, it denotes no such thing. It means no more, than that God *prefers* solid virtue, and substantial goodness, far before any ceremonial acts and performances whatever; or that he esteems the one as little or nothing worth, if weighed or valued against the other. Abundance of similar passages in the Old and New Testaments, will set this matter in the clearest light. Thus when God, in the prophet Jeremiah, tells the Jews, “I spake *not* unto your fathers, nor commanded them, in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning *burnt-offerings*, or *sacrifices*; but this thing commanded I them, saying, obey my voice;” the meaning is not, nor can it be, that God never appointed or required any sacrifices, or other branches of the Temple service; but that these were the smallest articles of the Mosaic religion:

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the great and capital commands were the *moral* ones, the observance of which is here eminently and emphatically stiled *obedience*-- "obey my voice." So, when the prophet Ezekiel says, that the Lord gave these same Jews, "statutes that were *not good*, and judgments whereby they should *not live*;" no man of reason can imagine him to intend, that God Almighty gave them *evil* or *wicked* statutes; but only that the outward ordinances and ceremonies which he enjoined them, in comparison with the moral and weightier precepts of their law, were of little avail, and contributed little towards the attainment of life and happiness. In all these cases, the more obscure and dubious expressions of scripture, are to be interpreted by those that are plain and explicit. The words of Samuel to king Saul, are direct to our purpose, and liable to no doubts or misconstructions: "hath the Lord *as great* delight "in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to "obey is *better* than sacrifice!" "Sacrifice, "rightly understood, and rightly performed, "is *good*; but a sincere veneration for your "Maker, and an hearty obedience to his
known

‘known will, is still *far better*.’ Moreover, in the *New Testament*, when our Lord declares, in the fifteenth chapter of St. Matthew, that “he was *not sent*, but unto the “lost sheep of the house of *Israel*,” to make these words signify, that Christ was not sent to be the Saviour of any part of the *Gentile* world, would be to contradict the whole scheme and tenor of scripture. And when in like manner he ordered his disciples in the tenth chapter, “Go *not into* the way of the “Gentiles, but go rather to the lost sheep “of the house of *Israel*,” his intention is manifest: Go *first*, and particularly at *this time*, to the people of *Israel*, to the nation of the Jews. And the conduct of the Apostles afterward, confirms this sense: for they tell the unbelieving Jews, in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts; “it was necessary that the “word of God should *first* be spoken to *you*: “but seeing ye put it from you, lo we turn “to the Gentiles; for so hath the Lord “commanded us.” And his own unlimited commission to them, after his resurrection, removes at once all remains of difficulty and uncertainty; “Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the gospel to *every creature*.

And

And now the sense of the text, both as it stands in the prophet Hosea, and as it is here applied by our blessed Saviour, will be evident: "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice:" "I esteem an upright and benevolent mind far above any external modes of worship, far above any outward forms of godliness;" which, when not accompanied with pious principles, and the practice of righteousness, are unprofitable and vain. The Scribe, in the gospel of St. Mark, who heard our Saviour sum up all the law of Moses in the love of God and our neighbour, had a right notion of this: "Master, says he, thou hast said the truth: for to love the Lord with all the heart, and his neighbour as himself, is *more than all* whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices."

Having given you this necessary explanation of the words before us, let me pursue the doctrine contained in them, in the few following reflections; which I shall farther endeavour to illustrate and confirm, by our own reason, and by the current of holy scripture.

And, 1. We should here learn, and well observe, (for it is of great moment to be observed)

served) what is really and properly religion;—the religion, I mean, that is to render us acceptable to God, and to fit us for the rewards of another life. And it appears, beyond all contradiction, that nothing can deserve this high character, but virtuous dispositions, and virtuous actions. These are *in themselves* good, and in their own nature tend to promote the happiness and perfection of every particular man, as a rational creature; and the peace and welfare of the whole species, considered as a *society* of such creatures. This, I say, is most apparent from the reason of things. For Godliness, truly speaking, is the imitation of God, the supreme original and pattern of all good. The love and reverence of *him*, is that which raises the soul to a blessed conformity to the image after which it was created. Justice and charity are immediately productive of that harmony and good order in the world, which was the great end of the divine wisdom that framed it, and of the divine goodness that gave it being. Sobriety, and the moderation of pleasures and passions, is what governs the mind itself with inward delight, and enables it to be useful and beneficial to others. All these have a merit, and an excellence in them, founded

absolutely in the relations we bear to God, and to each other; and are therefore of eternal and unchangeable obligation. But other matters, though they may with some borrowed propriety be called *religion*, yet they can, in their very nature, be subservient only to these greater ends: they may help indeed, and minister towards the things, but are not the things themselves. Thus, in the Jewish dispensation, prayer and sacrifice (for they always went together) were the method appointed by God Almighty for keeping up in the minds of that people, a continual remembrance of their dependence upon him, and of their obligations to acknowledge and obey him. So, in the more perfect dispensations of the gospel, our public offices of prayer and sacrament and baptism, though stripped of the forms and ceremonies of the old law, are yet directed to the same object. But still Christians, as well as Jews, may use the means, and disregard the end: and, whenever they do so, they turn them into mere *sacrifices*, into mere formalities that have no good effect, and are good for nothing at all.

Hence then, 2dly, you will easily perceive what ought to be the ultimate view and design

of all outward worship. It is called *religion*, not because it is goodness and piety *itself*: no; it is the religion of *means*, *instrumental* only towards producing in us that temper of mind, and that course of action, which is real righteousness. God, who made us sensible, as well as rational creatures, has appointed us sensible and external services, to assist, enliven, and carry us forward, in rational duties. These therefore no man, who thinks and acts rightly, will ever neglect. To do *that*, would be to neglect the only *general* way of preserving in the hearts of men, that inward sense of God and duty, which is the principle of all virtue. It would be, to deny religion that countenance and encouragement, which all men are bound to give it by their public example. For though a person, who is internally pure, may the less want any attendance upon outward forms, as to *himself*; yet he has a duty to *others*: the *community* claims his attendance, towards maintaining the *common* credit and honour of his religious profession.

Again; you see as plain a reason, why, though these things must not be slighted, yet they must on no account be relied upon, as
the

the main hope of a Christian towards God. There may be (God only knows how often there is) very little true worth, where there is a great deal of this outside piety: and, in such a case, it is most remarkable, what a contempt the scripture writings express of such worship, and with what indignation they treat such worshippers! "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? "Incense is an abomination unto me. I am "full of the fat of fed beasts. He that "killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man; he "that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a "a dog's neck; he that burneth incense, as "if he blessed an idol:" as much as to say, 'while your lives and practices continue to be 'wicked, it matters little how many rites ye 'observe, or what God ye pretend to adore.'

3dly. The doctrine of the text will supply us with a plain rule, how we are to behave, whenever any external performance interferes, or comes in competition, with a moral and essential duty. If circumstances so happen (as they will sometimes) that you cannot attend to both; it is an easy thing to know which to choose. Go and learn what our blessed Master did with the Sabbath. The Sabbath

Sabbath indeed is not a day of labour: but he that should let his ox perish in a ditch on that day, for fear of *labouring* to pull him out, deserves to lose him. And whoever stays at home, or travels abroad, to help the poor, or administer to the wants of the sick or the afflicted, is a truer Christian, than the man who leaves them in their necessities, to go to his church, and say his stated prayers. Neither our devotions, nor our alms, nor our oblations, ought to intrench upon our time, and labour, and care of our families: and a thousand monks in their holy convents, with their beads and their pater-nosters, are of far less service to the cause of religion, than one honest tradesman, or one industrious labourer for his daily bread, is to his children, and to his country, and to his God.

4thly. There is another thing, which we cannot but conclude from these scriptures; namely, what a vain and foolish hypocrisy it must be, for a man to raise and spend his zeal, nay especially his furious and uncharitable zeal in contending for favourite modes of worship, and the ceremonies of his church, while at the same time he can indulge himself in the transgression of duties the most interesting
and

and indispensable. It can hardly, I think, have escaped your observation, that our blessed Lord has pointed out this odious set of men called hypocrites, by the very zeal I now mention---an earnestness for, and in, external acts of devotion; a needless and troublesome scrupulosity about trifles, and a fondness to be seen and taken notice of in them; long prayers, and a precise exactness in paying small tithes that are but of little value;--a sorry character to strive for! which the meanest and worst man alive may as easily gain, as the best and the most honourable. Any villain can pray as long as a saint; and any debauchee and wealthy knave can offer sacrifice in abundance: but then it will be the sacrifice of a fool, as well as of a knave: for, since he has nothing of "judgment, mercy, and the love of God abiding in him;" all his recompense will be, to "receive the greater condemnation."

Whenever then you are thinking upon these subjects; upon these outward and inward branches of religion; these little and great articles of your Christianity; let me entreat you to recollect our Saviour's advice to the Scribes and Pharisees: "these ought
" ye

“ye to have done, and not to leave the other
“*undone.*” Neglect and despise no part;
even of *positive* or *appointed* duty; but trust
for Heaven to nothing, but your conscienti-
ous performance of the “*weightier matters* of
“the law.”

5. One remark more shall dismiss this ar-
gument. You see here the general cause of
the wrong estimate we frequently make of
the piety and goodness of each other. Hy-
pocrisy, as ill as it is, is a subtle and delud-
ing thing. It has a fair face, though it car-
ries a foul heart beneath. It is apt to mis-
guide our opinions by a false light. We too
commonly judge of mens religion by out-
ward appearances, and their observance of re-
ligious *forms*. Where we think these are at
all wanting, we suspect there is little or no
inward substantial virtue. Thus many a good,
and even great man, for want of a little ex-
ternal prudence, shall be branded with in-
famy; while multitudes of dissemblers carry
off all the applause and praise of *men*. Thus
we often condemn the guiltless, for want of
knowing what this scripture meaneth; “I
“will have mercy, and not sacrifice.” Let
us therefore go and learn this great lesson:--

the sum of it is, that we give to all sorts of actions their due esteem and commendation; that we consider all the offices of religion, as proper in their places, and good in their kinds, and pay regard to them accordingly; that we lay the chief stress on what we are sure will make us better; that we mistake not the means for the end, nor think to obtain the favour of God by any train of services, but those which "create in us the *image of God* in righteousness and true holiness."

I will give you the whole of my conclusion, in the excellent words of the son of Sirach: "He that keepeth the law" (the *moral* law) "bringeth offerings enough: he that taketh heed to the commandment, offereth a peace-offering. He that requiteth a good turn, offereth fine flour; and he that giveth alms, sacrificeth praise. To depart from wickedness, is a thing pleasing to the Lord; and to forsake unrighteousness is a propitiation."

To God, only wise, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N XVI.

MATTHEW ix. 13.

*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners
to repentance.*

THAT which gave occasion to these words of our blessed Master, was an unreasonable and perverse notion of the Jewish teachers; who imagined, without all ground, and contrary to their own scriptures, that the great Messiah was to be the Saviour of *their* nation only: that all other people were such sinners in the sight of God, as neither to be intended, nor qualified, for any share of that salvation. Hence they reproached our Lord, for even eating and conversing with Publicans and Heathens; and prostituting his doctrine to a set of men, who, as *they* conceived, were utterly unworthy of it.

Our Lord, in the passage before us, takes an opportunity of correcting this long and ill-founded mistake. He acquaints them with the general diffusive mercies of God, in the covenant of Christ;---that he was promised and sent, not to redeem a small remnant of mankind in a corner of the Jewish land, but to proclaim peace and pardon to the whole world;--that as disordered bodies have most need of a physician, so the sick and sinful soul has most occasion for a deliverer;---and that, accordingly, the principal view of *his* coming was, to cure and to save it by repentance. "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

In which words there are two sorts of persons mentioned, whose cases it will be proper to consider and explain.

I. Of righteous men it is here said, that Christ came not to call *them* to repentance; seemingly, as if they *wanted* none: But,

II. Of sinners it is affirmed, that *they* are the only subjects of repentance, and the only objects of Christ's coming into the world.

In the present discourse, I shall confine myself to the case of the righteous; and, in order to treat it the more clearly, I shall first
shew

shew you the meaning of the *terms*, Righteous Man, and Sinner : Secondly, from thence infer, what kind and degree of repentance this righteous man may *not* want ; what he really *does* want ; and what concern *he*, in common with all other men, has in the Gospel covenant and salvation.

For I take for granted you all believe, that there are none so holy, none whose lives are so spotless, as not to call for *some* repentance, and not to stand in need of that pardoning mercy, which the universal Saviour came to preach to the world,

First then. In the strict sense of the word *righteousness*, it is a punctual and exact conformity to the dictates of reason, and to the word of God : and *he* alone is absolutely righteous, who constantly and uninterruptedly obeys them *both*. But to this pitch of virtue what mortal ever did, or can attain ? Adam himself, though created upright, had, even in his state of innocency, no more than the uprightness of a *man* ! Compared with beings of superior excellencies, how short and imperfect were his best services ! However, imperfect as his obedience might be, had it but been *uniform*, and fully answerable

to his powers and faculties; it would have required no atonement: and had there been no sin, there would have needed no repentance. But as to *us*, the posterity of Adam; ever since ignorance and corruption have spread themselves over the world; ever since temptations, and bad examples, have abounded in the earth; *our* disadvantages have increased, our imperfections have multiplied, and our righteousness has fallen still far shorter of consummate virtue--the purest of it mixed up with many failings, many omissions, and some sins.

For these reasons therefore, the scriptures express a lower and more moderate notion of this word *righteousness*; and in the Gospel covenant it signifies, not a complete obedience, but a sincere one only;--- a general careful habit of goodness;---a man's *best endeavours* to preserve his integrity, and to discharge his several duties, in the state of life he is placed in;---with a merciful allowance for the many unavoidable failures and inadvertencies that may attend these endeavours, and a pardon for even the known sins he may sometimes fall into, and timely repent of.

This

This sincerity of heart, and honesty of intention, the Gospel through Christ has made *our* righteousness; and God, with all its defects, has graciously promised to accept and reward it as if it were faultless. A man of this character is called in scripture a *perfect* man: and when Abraham (who had failings as well as other men) was commanded to "walk before God, and to be *perfect*;" it only means, that he should be habitually diligent and desirous to please God in all things. And in the same sense are other saints and good persons stiled righteous, and faithful, and blameless.

Let us now consider the opposite character to that of the righteous man; and see what is the scripture notion of a sinner.

As he, and he only, is absolutely righteous, who never violates the law of his God; so he that at any time, in any one instance, disregards or transgresses that sacred law, is so far a sinner. But this word in scripture is for the most part a term of high reproach and infamy, to which is annexed the idea of punishment, indignation, and divine displeasure. There is an emphasis laid upon it; and the persons branded with it, are set forth

in a variety of strong expressions; such as "workers of iniquity," men that "commit sin," that "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness:"--by all which language are plainly denoted persons, that wilfully and deliberately *persist* in vice, and indulge their irregular passions; that are not accidentally drawn into evil, but run into it, and delight in it. Yet still, as there is a lower, and a more qualified acceptance of *righteousness*; so is there also of *sin*, and *sinners*. And as, though no man upon earth is exactly righteous, yet every devout and well-meaning Christian shall be considered and treated as if he were righteous; so is it with respect to wickedness:---they who may not be emphatically wicked, may yet without injustice be deemed sinners. Take the most unexceptionable man amongst us, and compare his life with the precepts of his Saviour, with the strict rule of his duty; and see what a poor copy you have of the divine original! what a defective imitation of an heavenly and all-perfect example! So many frailties, so many interruptions of true piety, not to say such numerous offences, as will of necessity

necessity demand *some* repentance, must have *some* need of a Gospel pardon.

I have said enough, I hope, by way of *explanation*, to make it an easy matter to determine, in the Second Place, how far each of these persons, the righteous and the sinner, is a subject of repentance, and is interested in the call of our blessed Saviour to it. Of a completely just man, our Lord might truly say, "he came not to call *him* to repentance;" because indeed there is no such man. Or those arrogant and conceited Pharisees, who fancied themselves superior to all *want* of repentance;---he might safely declare *them* to be out of the reach of his call: it would infallibly be lost upon them! The physician in vain gives advice to a patient, who is resolved to take no remedy, and to feed his own distemper. In short; habitual sin is but too often a desperate disease: whoever will apply for relief in any due time, ought not to be given over; but the man that has no feeling of his disorder, is past all cure!

This was the case of these Scribes and Rabbies, our blessed Master had now to deal with: they were too wise to learn wisdom,

too

too good to be converted. Yet this call was to *sinners*, even to old and great offenders; but still to such as would hearken and be convinced, and were desirous to repent and be saved. And what the repentance of such a sinner ought to be, is extremely plain and evident. His lusts must be subdued, and his evil habits forsaken; his very principles, and the whole temper of his mind must undergo a total alteration:---a work of such labour, and attended sometimes with such pangs and agony, that the holy scriptures are wont to paint it in the most striking figures. They call it a "new birth," a "new life," a "new creation," a "resurrection" "from dead works to a life of holiness." All which metaphors are quite spoiled, if you take them *literally*: since they mean no more, and were intended to signify no more, than the greatness, the difficulty, and at the same time the blessedness of the change, that is wrought in the heart and practice of an habitual but truly penitent sinner.

But when you consider this penitence as applied to that lower acceptance, wherein even honest and conscientious men may come under the title of sinners; you must adapt the

the call to repentance, to the condition of the subject. For *then* it can imply nothing farther, than an ingenuous acknowledgment of our mistakes and infirmities, a prudent and frequent review of our past actions, and a resolution to correct whatever, upon such review, we have found to be amiss. They that are depraved, and deeply defiled, must be washed throughout: but, says our Lord, "he that is clean," (that is *inwardly* pure) "needeth not to wash, save his feet only." The man who is virtuous in the main tenor of his conduct, and sullied only by some lighter stains, or carried aside by some sudden temptation, has no occasion for the severe penance of the *other* sinner; for that affliction of soul, or those tears and mortifications, that are required to conciliate the favour of an offended Creator, and to kill the poison of a corrupted nature. In a good Christian the spring of virtue will soon and easily return, though it may for a while have been somewhat bent from its wonted uprightness. As long as we dwell in these houses of clay, the corruptible body will be pressing down the soul, and the most healthy constitutions will be liable to some disorders. But then they are set right,
without

without long and tedious courses of physic. The physician may indeed be of service to them; but he is not called in, as to a person in a malignant fever,, under an inveterate chronical distemper, or in danger of present death.

The whole is this: We have *all* abundant reason to be often looking back, and rectifying the errors of our lives, and taking refuge in the repentance and pardon of the Gospel: but *that* reformation, which is of such indispensable necessity, and yet so hard to be effected, belongs solely to the *wicked* and the *sinner*.

And thus Christ came, to strengthen whatever is weak; to encourage, and help forward, whatever is sincerely, though imperfectly good; but, principally, you see, he came to recover and to save that which was lost.

Before I make an end, there are a few lessons of practical instruction, which I would recommend to your thoughts from this first branch of my subject; and which shall be addressed, not to the immoral part of men (for I reserve *their* case to another opportunity) but to the more moral and Christian.

And,

And, 1. Let me remark to you, what an obligation there lies, even upon the best of mankind, to modesty, humility, and charity! Had these haughty Pharisees, who thus rallied our blessed Master for preaching to Publicans and Sinners, been ten times as holy as they were; what ground could they possibly have had for boasting? What pretence for despising their neighbours, or for concluding themselves as righteous as they ever needed to be? What had the good Abraham himself, with all his faith, nay and all his works too, to boast of before his Maker? But there is no *son* of Abraham, nor any one *disciple of Christ*, who can honestly cast up the sum of *his* life, without blushing to compare himself with that "Father of the faithful, and Friend of God." It is an infinite deal of damage that spiritual pride will do to many, otherwise commendable qualities. Hardly any persons are so far from perfection, as those who imagine themselves already perfect: and he that can presume he wants no repentance, is in great danger of coming to want it the most of all men.

2dly. Let me administer a lesson of comfort, from what I have said, to those worthy
Christians,

Christians, who, when they have omitted some duty, or done something wrong, and repented of and corrected it; are yet oppressed with doubts and fears, lest they should not have lamented it *enough*, and that their repentance should not be full and sufficient.

Observe here, how easy it is for a good and tender mind to mistake its own case! You may indeed have been guilty of a particular act, or neglect, that may call for *some* repentance; but you cannot need the repentance of an hardened and habitual sinner. You may at a certain juncture have in some degree forgotten God, without being estranged from him, and forsaken of him. Your early consideration of your fault, and your serious amendment of it, is, in *your* case, the full nature of repentance. If you be returned to your former good habit of mind and practice, you are returned to your God. Repentance, you have seen, is to be proportioned to the nature of the offence, and the state of the offender. It is not the same arduous task to an heart in general clean, as it is to one that has long been vitiated and polluted. And as “he that covereth his sins shall not prosper,” let it be *your* consolation, that “he that confesseth

"fesseth and forsaketh them, cannot fail to
"find mercy." But nevertheless,

3dly. Let no good Christian forget, that
his Saviour has a perpetual call upon him,
not only to careful duty, but to a constant
progress and improvement in that duty. If
you be not summoned to the painful repen-
tance of a *sinner*, you are warned to give all
diligence that you never may *want* it. If you
be not *now* under the dominion of any vice,
your Lord calls upon you to use every caution
that you never *may be* so; to "watch and
"pray, that ye enter not into temptation;"
that "your hearts be not overcharged with
"surfeiting, and the cares of this life;" that
"the word now dwelling in you, become not
"unfruitful," and that the great and last "day
"come not upon you unawares;" that, vir-
tuous as you *now* may be, you be "sober and
"vigilant," because you have an "adversary,"
indeed you have *many* adversaries "walking
"about as roaring lions, seeking whom they
"may devour;" that, in fine, while you
"think and resolve to stand, you take heed
"lest you fall:"---in all which, and num-
berless other lessons of the like kind, even
the most unblemished Christian has great con-
cern,

cern, while he is a sojourner in this state of trial.

Moreover; the same God, who has bestowed the grace wherein a good man stands, has likewise commanded him to "grow in that grace." If you have no need of deep sorrow for the virtues you have lost, you are ordered to be continually "going on to perfection" in those you are possessed of. It can never become one who is entered into the school of Christ, to rest himself always in one form. "In your father's house are many mansions," of higher and lower glories. If you be already worthy of any one of them, it is your privilege, and your duty also, to strive after the attainment of a better and a nobler. And what manifest *reason* is there for all this! It is very often the same thing in *morals*, as it is in *learning*: 'not to go forward, will endanger you to run backward; and there may be as many degrees in degeneracy, as in improvement.

4thly, therefore; I cannot conclude, without once more reminding you, how seasonable is this voice of admonition and exhortation, not to ordinary Christians only, but to the most accomplished! You may have lived perhaps

perhaps what *you* may think your best, and abundantly sufficient for all good purposes. But reflect, I beseech you, whether there be not still great room for amendment; how many deficiencies there are, still to be supplied; how much may yet be added to every one of your virtues;---to your knowledge of God, of his nature, and his word; to your love of him; to your pious hope, and reliance upon him; to your patience and submission to all the dispensations of his divine Providence!

Behold, what a call is here upon every man, through the whole course of this life of probation, to be “stedfast, unmoveable, always “abounding in the work of the Lord; that “his labour, at last, be not in vain!”

perhaps when you may think your heart
 is entirely devoted to all good purposes.
 But reflect, I beseech you, whether there be
 not still great room for improvement; how
 many desires there are, still to be
 filled; how much more yet to be added to every
 one of your virtues; — to your knowledge of
 God, to his nature, and his word; to your
 love of him; to your peace, hope, and joy;
 and upon him; to your patience and lab-
 oration to all the dispositions of his divine

Word.

Behold, what a call is here upon every man,
 to weigh the whole course of his life at pre-
 sent, to be a faithful, unmovable, sincere
 standing in the word of the Lord; that
 the reward at last be not in vain.

SERMON XVII.

MATTHEW ix. 13.

*I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners
to repentance.*

WHEN I had in my last discourse, explained the scripture terms of *righteousness* and *righteous man*, of *sin* and *sinner*; I imagine I made it easy to apprehend in what sense even a virtuous person may fall under the denomination of a *sinner*, and be interested in the purpose of our blessed Saviour's coming to call men to repentance; and likewise how far such a person may be rightly understood *not* to be included in that call: --which explanation of the former part of the text, I endeavoured to apply to a practical use, for comforting the heart, or for exciting the care and vigilance, of the pious and sincere Christian.

I am now to lay before you the more principal design of this call to repentance, as it relates to sinful men properly so stiled in scripture language; namely, the deliberate and habitual transgressors of the laws of reason, and of God. And with this view, I shall remark to you,

First, the extent and universality of this gracious call of Christ in his Gospel.

Secondly, the reasonableness, the necessity, and the mercy of it.

When this is done, I shall try to give these considerations their due influence upon the minds and consciences of such as are concerned in them.

First then; there never was an error founded in greater pride, or more wilful corruption, than that of the *Jews*; who had persuaded themselves, that the salvation of Christ was to be confined absolutely to their single nation. Whereas how clear are their own scriptures to the contrary! How fully are the mercies of God promised in those scriptures, to the whole race of mankind? How could it ever be understood that in the "seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth should be blessed," if that blessing was not
to

to be conveyed by the religion and kingdom of the Messiah? If the enclosures were not one day to be laid open, the partition wall to be broken down, and all flesh to see and taste the salvation of God? If, in short, repentance and remission of sins were not to be preached, in the Saviour's name, unto all people? As for that good patriarch, and his posterity the Jews, they have been so far from being a channel of *worldly* and *temporal* prosperity to the rest of mankind, that (God help them) they have long ago lost and forfeited all *their own* blessings; are dispersed, and broken, and become examples of divine vengeance, over the face of the whole earth!

But to leave *them* in their incurable blindness---the persons our heavenly Master was now about to call to repentance and life, shew you, beyond exception, the unbounded extent of the Gospel mercy and grace to sinners. Publicans and Heathens were sinners, at that time, in the highest degree. Their lives had been a scene of the grossest ignorance, and the blackest vices. A pardon offered to offenders like these, is an argument of the freest and most enlarged compassion; and ought to be used as a remedy against all

despair. Only let it be remembered, that this grace is held out to none (or at least it can be effectual to none) but to such as will timely embrace it, and carefully and thankfully lay hold of it---to such only, as will accept the terms, and comply with the conditions of it; in a word, to those repenting Christians only, who will take pattern by the conversion, and follow the good example, of the sinners mentioned in holy scripture. When our blessed Lord called Levi the Publican from his oppressive and gainful employment under the Roman government; you read of no excuses, no delays: he rose up instantly, and followed him; carried him home; provided an entertainment for him, and invited his brethren and fellow publicans to partake of it, in hope no doubt that *his* conversion might make a good impression upon *them* towards the same repentance. So Zaccheus, another eminent sinner, but sensible of his crimes and willing to be reclaimed, came to Christ upon the first summons, and shewed his repentance, as every good man does his *faith*, by his works. "Behold Lord," says he, "the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from
" any

“any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.” And observe, I entreat you, how gracious and immediate was the divine answer to such a declaration: “Jesus said unto him, this day is salvation come to this house.”

Let me now, secondly, set before your thoughts the ‘reasonableness, the necessity, and even the mercy of this Gospel dispensation, which makes repentance, and reformation of life, the sole condition that can qualify a sinful man to become the object of the favour of God through Christ.’

In the dealings of Almighty God with the rational and moral world, all the attributes of a consummate governor must act in perfect harmony and concert with each other. Wisdom, justice, goodness, holiness, are all equally engaged in the method of reconciling and pardoning offenders. The honour of all government demands, that this be never done in a loose and unguarded manner. Infinite mercy itself is but a name without a meaning, if you imagine it can grant forgiveness, and bestow its favours, arbitrarily, and void of all conditions. No, men must first be proper objects of it.

Give me leave to set this matter in the clearest light I am able, with regard to all the parties concerned in the pardon and salvation of a sinner: namely, 1. Almighty God himself. 2. Christ Jesus, who came to procure and to preach that salvation. And, 3. The sinner, who is to obtain and to enjoy it.

1. With respect to God, our genuine and most most natural conceptions of *him*, shew him to us as the supreme, all-perfect Being; set at an infinite distance from every thing that bespeaks evil, weakness, passion, or depravity. He then, who can do no evil himself, can never be reconciled to it in another. He may indeed forbear his vengeance for a while, and withhold the stroke of his thunder from the heads of rebellious and corrupted creatures: but love them he cannot, as a lover of righteousness; and absolutely forgive them he must not, as a wise governor. . The holy scriptures therefore, in declaring repentance to be indispensably requisite to salvation, fix it upon a foundation sure and eternal as the divine nature itself: they speak what is worthy of God, the giver of

of all law, and the just judge of all the earth.

2. Look next upon the *Son of God*, upon his gracious purpose of coming into the world to be a merciful Mediator between offended majesty and guilty subjects. He is consequently, by his very office and character, equally intrusted with the honour of one party, as with the peace and happy recovery of the other. By no possible means could this recovery be effected, but by bringing men back from the iniquity of their conduct to that duty and allegiance, which was originally and essentially required of them, and from which they had fallen. For this Mediator therefore to plead for any creature still persisting in its disobedience and rebellion; to present his own blood, his own righteousness, in behalf of those who delight in the sins that brought *him* to the cross;—what would all this be, but to betray the honour of the eternal Father, to prostitute the merits of his own death, and to defeat the whole end and design of his undertaking for us!

3. This truth is equally evident, with relation to the sinner himself. For without this change of disposition, and of habits, wrought

wrought in us by repentance, admittance into Heaven (were it possible to be supposed) could give the profligate no enjoyment of its blessings. There would be a contradiction between the nature of the happiness, and of the subject who was to receive it. For the future life of glory, will not be a scene of sensible and external delights. Heaven is not a place hung round with infinite entertainments for all the five senses. But *its* joys belong to the mind, are seated *within* us, and consist in the advancement of our spiritual and heavenly part. Its beauties are all of the moral kind, its pleasures those of refined reason and the purest goodness. The objects of those pleasures are God, ourselves, and our fellow-creatures made perfect with us. The state of the soul will *then* be such, as results from a virtuous and well-governed will, and a noble command of all the inclinations and affections; from an exalted understanding, an enlarged knowledge of God, of his works and perfections, and his wonderful dispensations of wisdom and mercy towards us; from the love of him, and the ever pleasing sense of being beloved by him.

This

This is to be happy, because this is to be good. The contrary state, the state of vice unrepented, is to be miserable --- to be *inwardly* miserable, be your outward situation what it will. Change of place would make no difference; Heaven itself would not alter it. The only thing which can remove *that* misery, is a change of temper, of principles and practice. And verily it would have been but a small favour in God to have granted us life, without first granting us "repentance unto life;" or in Christ to have purchased Heaven for us, without first instructing us in those amiable accomplishments that are to adorn us for it, and to enable us to enjoy it.

Thus then, I hope, appears the *reason* why God treats with the sinner upon the sole condition of "newness of life." The strongest of all reasons is necessity, flowing from the essence, and unchangeable relations of the things themselves. God deals with us in Christ as our *own* nature and *his* nature stand related to each other; agreeably to the inseparable connection between moral goodness and real happiness. He redeemed us, it is true, out of compassion to us as sinners; but he can bring us to his heavenly kingdom, in
reward

reward only of our humble and faithful services.

But let us observe farther, not only what reason and necessity, but moreover what paternal care and love of mankind, there shines out in all this divine proceeding! Here is the infinite condescension of the Almighty Father, providing a reconciliation for his guilty children, and admitting them to it;---of the Son of God, by his unexampled humiliation and sufferings sealing and confirming this pardon to them. Not only so, but the plan laid down, the terms and conditions upon which they are to be received into favour, are so natural, so expedient, and conducive to their supreme good, as demonstrate the great Lawgiver to be truly solicitous for their welfare. To require and demand, to encourage, exhort, and assist us, to turn from our evil ways and become virtuous; do all bespeak the sincerest desire we should be happy, by directing us to the sure and only means that can make us so; by leading us to those duties and graces, that are the beginning and foretaste of the future unspeakable blessings promised to repentance. By what this compassionate Master invites and commands us to
be

be in the present world, we have a certain and most comfortable assurance what we are hereafter to be in the next. For every degree of goodness is a step to glory : and glory is the perfection of virtue and felicity.

As I directed my last discourse on the former part of this text, to the improvement of even good and conscientious Christians ; I shall address the application of this, to the sinful, and yet unreformed.

Behold here, whether in point of gratitude, prudence, self-love and self-interest, you have not the highest and strongest inducements to hearken to, and comply with, this call to repentance ! Consider, if it be not infinitely worth your pains (be the pains never so great) to break off your evil habits, and to amend your lives ! You remember, that when Naaman the Syrian came to Elisha to be cured of his leprosy, he seemed to despise the prophet's remedy, because it was so easy, so void of ceremony and apparatus : " Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and " thou shalt be clean." But his servants advised him well : " My father, if the prophet " had bidden thee do some great" (some hard " and difficult) " thing, wouldst thou not
" have

“have done it? How much rather then, when he only saith to thee, wash and be clean?” Believe me, this is very similar to your own case! Had the great God, in order to your avoiding his displeasure, or obtaining his everlasting favour, appointed you a set of duties in themselves indifferent, nay troublesome and costly like the Jewish ceremonies; or that had even borne hard upon human nature, and crossed you in the purer and more innocent pleasures of your lives; that had no apparent tendency to promote your most rational happiness, by refining and exalting your affections;---yet, I say, if the divine favour and bounty had been the certain though arbitrary reward of your labours, would you not have gladly complied with the demand? Could you have stood out, or have thought the prize did not vastly overbalance the pains of striving for it? See therefore the blindness and infatuation of a vicious mind! When now a blessed and immortal life is laid before you, and the condition of attaining it is none of this hard and unpleasing service; nothing but a return to the practice of duties, that make you feel their goodness and pleasure in their very exercise;

ercise; that carry their noble influences and designs in the very face of them; that prepare you for, and put you into the infallible way to arrive at, your final and essential good;---what guilt and ingratitude are you loaded with, if you reject the offer of an eternal world, by refusing to perform what alone can give you true quiet and peace of mind even in this transient one! For try the case farther, as it respects your *present*, as well as your future interest: observe what it is, this repentance of the Gospel would call you *from*, what it would persuade and induce you *to*. It will take you from none of the lawful or necessary business of life, from not one of its real and genuine pleasures. No! it rather encourages, heightens and sweetens them all, by confining them to the limits of usefulness and innocence. It recalls you from nothing, but that injustice and inhumanity to each other, that profligacy of life and manners, which debase your rational faculties, and deface the divine image in which you were created; from vices that destroy their own relish, and kill their own pleasure, and, by being over-indulged and unreformed, will utterly divest you of the character of
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men; and of all capacity of being happy men. These are the distempers of which religion would cure you, and recover you to a sound and healthy constitution of mind, by implanting in you good desires, and converting you to the love and practice of those good works, that always please in the present acts, and are ever most delightful in their future prospect. This it is to be called to repentance; to be brought back from sin to the imitation of God, the fountain of truth, the original of all perfection; to those celestial graces, to which if Christ had not previously called you, even that Redeemer himself could never have opened for you the way to Heaven, nor have been the author of your spiritual and everlasting salvation!

To him be glory.--

S E R M O N

SERMON XVIII.

LUKE XV. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

THERE is, in a virtuous course of life, such a natural and eternal beauty, such an honour and grace, as gives it this noble prerogative, of having its worst enemies to be either its enviers, or admirers. That justice and tenderness towards men, that conscience towards God, and that generous command of the appetites and passions, which the lewd and revengeful, the cruel and the profane, so much neglect in themselves, they are yet ashamed not to commend and magnify as glorious accomplishments in another man. It is no wonder then to be told, how much the purer

and more rational part of the universe love what is good, and admire and delight in it wherever it is found;--that, so far as he acts up to the dignity of his nature, every spiritual being blesses himself in his own virtue, and is not able to meet it in any of his fellow beings without joy and exultation;--and that even *man*, though probably the lowest of the rational creation, cannot escape the dangers and deformities of vice, and reap the fruits of true wisdom, but angels above rejoice at it; nay, that the infinite God himself has a complacency in such wisdom and happiness, as being the amiable though but faint resemblance of himself, the unbounded source and exemplar of rectitude and perfection.

This great and comfortable truth our blessed Saviour, the more strongly to encourage and invite even the wickedest of men to sobriety, and repentance, has, in a most charming manner, displayed to us in three distinct parables; that of the lost sheep, of the lost piece of silver, and of the prodigal and lost son. These three parables are the subject of the chapter before us; and the sweet moral of them all is contained and summed up in
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the words of the text. My purpose is, to set them all in one and the same light, by giving you some explanation, and making some reflections,

- I. Upon the objects of this joy.
- II. Upon the subjects of it.

In discoursing on the former, (to which I shall at this time confine myself) I will consider, First, *who* are the objects of this celestial joy, namely sinners: Secondly, the *qualification* that makes them capable of exciting it, namely repentance: Thirdly, I shall shew you, who are those "just persons," that are here said to "need no repentance."

First then: The object of this joy is a sinner:---in the full latitude of which word; it is certain that all of us may be included under it. There is not a man amongst us without his numerous failings, and I may venture to say not without some wilful sins. Nor is it to be doubted, but that, as we endeavour after the correction and amendment of these;---as any one refines and improves himself in goodness;---it is to the proportional joy of all good men upon earth, and of the holy angels in Heaven. But the term *sinner* has often in the New Testament, a particular

idea annexed to it, and denotes a particular sort of men: and the scope and design of these parables will easily shew you, who those men are. Our blessed Lord was now discoursing among Publicans and Heathens; the one of whom by their idolatry and false worship; and the other by their injustice and oppressive dealings, had obtained from the Jews the scornful and emphatical title of *sinners*. And therefore when our Saviour expresses a joy at the return of such men by repentance, it appears that his intention was, to denote all the habitual, all the more practised and eminent degrees of transgressors. And yet he invites even *these* to reformation, and the pardon of their sins. The pharisaical Jews indeed would have them all to be excluded from God's covenant of grace, and incapable of any conversion. But the Son of God, by his doctrine and practice, demonstrated the pardoning mercy of the Gospel not to be thus partial and confined. *That* mercy was not like the dew that was to wet a Gideon's fleece, and leave all the rest of the earth dry and barren; but was that dew of Heaven, which was to refresh and revive the whole repenting world---a mercy worthy of
him,

him, who came not only to confirm and strengthen that which was already whole, but more especially to seek and to save that which was lost.

The inferences we should naturally draw from the foregoing head, are these two.

1. 'That our blessed Saviour has here left
'to sinners of the worst kind, a comfortable
'remedy against all absolute despair:'---a remedy, I say, to every man, who has *left himself* any time for amendment, any just reflection of mind, any real desire to recover the health of his soul, and the favour of his Creator. What less can be gathered from these three affectionate parables, formed on purpose to raise and lift up the hearts of the vilest of people to a sense of their guilt, and to the consideration of God's compassionate regard for their eternal welfare? To shew them that true and timely repentance is never too late, and a pardon upon it never impossible to be obtained;---that there needs nothing to save a man, even though he were once in a lost condition, but an unfeigned concern for his past sins, and a future attention and application to his duty proportionate to the length and malignity of his crimes.

Despair therefore is the fruit of the most abandoned, or of the weakest mind. Though indeed (as I have generall found) it is rather the effect of a diseased habit of body, of ill circulating blood, and a distempered brain. Religion forbids it; and consequently reason can give it no countenance.

But then, 2. as here is enough to keep the sinner from despairing of "repentance unto life;" is there not also what is abundantly sufficient to shew him the dangerous and wretched circumstances that attend a state of habitual wickedness? Let him observe the striking figures, the pathetic representations, under which these parables have painted him! He is a *poor prodigal*, reduced by his own extravagance to beggary, banished from his father, and contemned by every body else. Such is *every* profligate man, by all the laws of nature, and of providence--stript of every laudable quality; destitute of all spiritual good; the object of divine indignation; the scorn or pity of every wise and good being.

He is a *lost sheep* that has strayed from his pasture, and deprived himself of all the genuine food that should nourish him in manly sentiments,

sentiments, in a right understanding of himself, of the world, and of his Maker.

He is a "lost piece of money," lost to all usefulness towards his own or other mens happiness: he is a coin that has the original stamp worn out, the image and impression of God erased from his heart by his follies and his passions, and is for the present as truly worthless as if he were utterly lost.

To all this be pleased to add the other numerous characters wherein the holy scriptures are wont to describe the condition of a gross offender against the dictates of reason, and the sacred precepts of religion. They call it *blindness* and *darkness*, *wounds* and *bruises*, *stumbling* and *falling*, *terror* and *fear*, *sickness* and *death*. Abundance of sinners, of the younger sort especially, will not be brought to consider these things, till time and sad experience makes them see and feel what an exact picture these scriptures have drawn of the sottishness and infatuation, the pains and the penalties, of a dissolute and vicious life.

Thus then, as this name of *sinner* in these parables, serves to display to you the abundant mercies of God towards mankind; so

let it be a warning to all who deserve that name, to be as speedy as possible in their repentance : ---- Which *repentance*,

II. Is the next point I am to speak to, as the *qualification* that is to render such a man an object of the heavenly joy. And this I shall consider, first, with respect to the different kinds and degrees of it, that may be requisite for the pardon of different men : secondly, with respect to the reasonableness, equity, and mercy of it, as the express condition of the sinner's acceptance with his Maker.

The circumstances of every man's former life and conduct must determine what measure of repentance is necessary for his reconciliation to God. Those errors and inadvertencies, those sudden failures, and even sins, from hasty passion, or some unforeseen temptation, to which even good men may be liable, do indeed call for *some* correction. We have need, the best of us, to be often looking back, and reviewing and regulating what has been faulty in us. But this is a work, comparatively speaking, soon and easily done. It is no difficult matter for one that is habitually good, to heal his lesser and particular breaches of the divine commands. Done, however,

however, it ought to be, and must be. It is the duty of every Christian to strive after perfection, though he cannot yet arrive at the fulness of it. But the sinner our Saviour *here* speaks of, is not the man of failings, but of customary and scandalous vices. *His* case therefore will demand a much severer discipline, and a more painful course of reformation. Where the will is depraved, and the affections have been greatly and long corrupted, *there* must be a great, a total change. The scriptures accordingly have expressed this important work by the strongest figures and comparisons:---they call it "regeneration," the being "born again," a "renewal of the "spirit and temper of the mind," an alteration of the whole inward man equal almost to a "new creation." And *how* is this change to be wrought in the heart and life of such a sinner? Is it to be the sole effect of an irresistible influence of the divine spirit? Is the man himself to have no part in it? This would be strange mechanical work upon a rational and free mind! No---it must take its first rise from your own serious reflections, serious desires, and active diligence; upon which foundation, the spirit of God, and the heavenly

heavenly favour and assistance, will carry on, and prosper, what *you* have so happily begun. For when God is said in scripture to "grant" "men repentance unto life," the meaning is, that he graciously affords us the means and opportunities of seeing our errors, and repenting of them. It is God's grace and bounty to give this, but it is man's duty and interest to make use of and improve it. And how indispensably requisite is it, that an habitual transgressor should thus labour to work this reformation in himself! not by a few silent misgivings, and faint resolutions; not by a little grave talk, and a few pious words; but by endeavours strong, vigorous, and constant; till new habits be formed, new and contrary desires, inclinations, and practises; till the divine image be repaired and restored in righteousness;---without which it is impossible that God can take pleasure in, or angels rejoice at the conversion.

2dly then: Let us next observe, that 'as much pains as this repentance may cost a wicked man; yet it is the most reasonable, nay it is the *easiest* condition, upon which the wise and good God could possibly receive him to pardon and happiness.' Goodness

ness and purity is the very essence of God: and for *him* to permit a rational creature to continue in the practice of any vice, would only be suffering it to remain incapable of reconciliation to him, and destitute of all means of being happy in him. For Heaven is the consummation of goodness, and of grace; and the love and exercise of virtue *now* is the natural and only preparative, the beginning of that Heaven, which is *then* to be completed! How just and merciful therefore are the terms of the Gospel,--that 'men should break off their sins; even their most inveterate and darling vices, by repentance;' which indeed is nothing else but beginning truly to live, and to act with real pleasure. And though the first attempts towards this desirable change may be somewhat painful, yet must the sense of religion, of duty and interest, the hope and blessed prospect waiting on the endeavour, continually lighten the labour, and render it every day more and more easy and satisfactory! when the very task required of you, is only to unlearn what has been your present vexation, and must end in your future torment; and to learn those habits of thought and action, that are the first

first fruits of joy in this life, and will grow up and ripen into an eternal felicity.

I am, III. to finish this first discourse, by enquiring who those "just persons" are, of whom our Saviour here affirms that they "need no repentance." In the strict acceptation, there is no such man upon earth, that "doeth good, and sinneth not." Our passions are too urgent, our temptations and infirmities too many, to let it be supposed. The expression therefore, like several others, is to be limited by the occasion on which, and the persons to whom, it was spoken. Our Lord, as I said before, was now discoursing among *Jews* and *Pharisees*; who, as he tells us, "trusted in themselves that they "were righteous, and despised others." They thought themselves so faultless, and such favourites of Heaven, as to be above all need of the Gospel repentance. Christ, in these parables, informs these presumptuous men, that one poor Heathen, or a single Publican, as grievous a sinner as *they* might deem him, should, upon his true repentance, find more favour with God, and cause more joy in Heaven, than a hundred such as themselves, so blind and so conceited, as to imagine they were

were already supremely just, and pure from all sin:--a lesson that was intended not merely to silence the confident Jew, but to admonish and instruct the best of Christians,---
 ‘ how much more acceptable in the sight of
 ‘ God, and in the eye of all reason, is a penitent confession even of the greatest guilt,
 ‘ than a haughty opinion of what might otherwise be a considerable virtue.’ No one is so distant from perfection, as he that has the vanity to think he has attained it: and the most notorious offender, melting into contrition, and returning to his God, promises much more of good, than the man who looks upon him with an eye of uncharitableness and disdain: and to have done evil, and be heartily sorry for it, seems a far better case, than to do well, and be proud of it. The short truth is this---virtue is never perfect till she is crowned with humility: nor can sin be generally so great, but that a devout and timely repentance will gain a pardon for it.

But again; it will bear a good and a true sense, and be quite agreeable to our Lord’s design, to say, that ‘ a man who is upright
 ‘ and innocent in the *main tenor* of his life,
 ‘ needs

'needs no repentance'---not absolutely none at all; but he does not want *such* a repentance as the *sinner* does, of whom our Saviour was *now* speaking; he does not want the bitter regret, the solemn degree of remorse, that becomes the dissolute and old transgressor; he wants only a partial, not a total conversion. A cool and sedate reflection, a gentle and seasonable consideration of his error, will set him right again.

And this may be a lecture of due consolation to many pious Christians, who, when they have been guilty of some particular failure, or had some wandering and improper thoughts, are filled with suspicions and perplexing fears, that, though they have sincerely corrected the fault, yet they have not *sufficiently* repented, have not *enough* bewailed and lamented it. Let such well meaning persons take courage, and be satisfied: look upon your Saviour's own words, and learn from *them* what is the repentance which he has enjoined you. You are not like the *sick*, that must have a physician to prevent immediate death. It is enough if your concern be but proportioned to the nature and frequency of your offence. A *life* of wickedness will call
for

for a long and laborious repentance: but infirmities, and single instances of misconduct, are soon rectified by an honest heart, and soon forgiven by a merciful Saviour.

Yet finally; notwithstanding this, and every other consolation, let us all be constantly looking back, and by degrees purifying our hearts, and improving our conduct. Let our sense of what we have done amiss, be rational, calm, and steady, without terror and confusion. Let us guard against future defects, by the remembrance of those that are past; and then we shall never come under the scripture character of *sinners*: this continual repentance, easy as it is, will keep us from falling: God will accept us, and angels will rejoice for us!

SERMON XIX.

LUKE XV. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

FROM the natural scope of this and two other like parables of our Saviour, and from a consideration of the persons to whom they were spoken; I have, in my foregoing discourse, endeavoured to explain to you, First, *what kind of sinners* our blessed Lord here meant; namely, the habitual and customary sort of offenders, denoted by the Publicans and Gentiles. Secondly, *what kind of repentance* that of such sinners ought to be; and lastly, who are the men our Lord intended by those *just persons*, that are here supposed to *need no repentance*. From my

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explication

explication of each of these branches, I made some of the most useful and practical reflections; and so finished the first general head, concerning the *object* of that joy, which is represented to be in Heaven.

II. I have, at this time, to consider the joy itself;---in order to which it will, I hope, be of good use to you, if I can set in a proper light,

1. The subjects of this heavenly joy.
2. The measure and degree of it here expressed; by shewing you in what sense we are to understand that this joy is greater at the conversion of a single sinner, than what is caused by the perseverance of many righteous men in virtue and piety. "Joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance."

First then; there will be joy in Heaven--- by which our own reason, and the parables themselves tell us, are signified the *inhabitants* of those glorious regions above. The man that had found his lost sheep; the father who embraced his returning prodigal; the person that recovered the lost piece of money;--- do all represent the good God and Father of Mercies,

Mercies, who is ever seeking all that are lost, all that are *willing to be found* by returning to him in dutiful and rational obedience. And by those *friends and neighbours* that are called together to join in this joy, we are clearly told are meant the good angels.

Let us consider then, how either of these can be said to have *joy* at the conversion of a sinner.

Joy is that pleasant feeling or emotion of mind, which is occasioned by some present or expected good. And when this is applied to any created and dependent being, it imports an agreeable change of thought, an addition of delight, excited by some object proper to raise it, in proportion to the faculties of such a being. It is the inseparable quality of finite spirits, to be capable of degrees and increase of their pleasures. But when we speak of affections that belong to *ourselves*, and use them as representations of the *supreme mind*; we must divest them of all their literal notion; strip them of all imperfection; and take them as mere comparisons, made in condescension to our weak capacities of thinking and speaking. Thus, as the wisdom, power, providence, and omnipresence of God, are

described by his "having *hands* and *eyes* and "ears;" so when the almighty all-sufficient Creator is said to *rejoice*, we understand a *complacency* indeed in the divine mind, but yet without any emotion or passion. He, by the infinite perfection of his nature, can suffer no change from any event, can receive no new delight from any new object. And as all his dispensations towards his creatures, are founded in eternal unalterable reason, and in the fixed relations of things and persons; so our obedience and happiness are pleasing to him, without addition of happiness to *himself*; and our follies and miseries can affect him with no uneasiness or regret. In short, God permits us to speak of *him*, as we do of *ourselves*; and to say, that he *rejoices*, upon certain occasions; while yet our own reason, as well as his holy word, informs us, that infinite wisdom and goodness enjoys itself in one perfect, uniform, and unchangeable measure of self-satisfaction. But,

2. As to the *other* subjects of this joy, the blessed *angels*, the case is not so with them. *They*, being of finite understandings, and bounded in every perfection of mind, are continually liable to new motions of thought,
and

and increase of delight. Particularly with respect to *mankind*, there is a double reason why they should receive an accession of joy from a sense of our virtues and welfare. First, because they are of the same common nature as *spirits*, and differ from us only in *degrees* of spiritual powers and excellencies, or in having *bodies* of a nobler and more refined composition. From whence, as created rational beings, as our heavenly brethren, and servants of the same God, they cannot but earnestly wish for, and rejoice to behold, the good order and felicity of all who are so related to them; who are imprest with the same lovely characters and divine image with themselves. That innate regard they have for the glory of God's kingdom, and for the honour of his moral government, cannot but fill their pure uncorrupt minds with the warmest pleasure at the happiness of all their fellow creatures and fellow subjects.

Nay, secondly, these blessed spirits have a nearer relation to us, a more intimate concern for our well-being, by way of *office*. The holy scriptures assure us, "they are all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who should be heirs of salvation."

And our Saviour says of his faithful disciples (whom for their innocency he compares to children) that they have *angels for their guardians*, "who always behold the face of their father who is in Heaven." Those celestial spirits therefore, whose care and charge we are; who help and assist us, as candidates for the same glory *they* now enjoy; who long for us, to fill up the vacancies of Heaven;--- must not *they* look upon every soul lost, as their own common loss? Must not our folly, and stubborn behaviour, give them pain? Must not our return to God, our repentance and salvation, give them joy, exultation and triumph?

And here let us stand, and reflect a while.
 1st. The more excellent and perfect any creature is, the more generous regard it always shews, to the interests and prosperity of all its fellow-creatures. And as the great God himself is all-perfect, and infinite in excellency; so does he excell all other beings in goodness and benignity. The kindnesses of no friend, the compassions of no father, are like to, or can be compared with *his*. But all the heavenly spirits, in their several proportions, are benevolent, and take the purest

purest delight in the welfare of others. God rejoices in his angels, and those angels rejoice in the wisdom and happy recovery of all good and penitent men.

And hence we may learn, how sadly unworthy of these noble examples are those men (for it is a shame to say those *Christians*) who are mere lovers of themselves, and their own gratifications; void of all feeling for the indigent, for their country! Angels look down upon us, so far below them, and inferior to them; while these degenerate creatures think it too much to cast an eye of care upon those, that are so nearly and closely allied to them!

But especially let us here observe, how opposite to the true temper and constitution of a rational soul, is the vile passion of *envy*. Envy is the property of base and depraved spirits; of devils, corrupted in their natures, and fallen from their stations, and hating all others that do not fall as *they did*.

And remember it, I beseech you, when any of you look with an evil eye upon the good conduct, or the good fortune, of your neighbour,; what are you doing, but indulging the dictates of a fordid and a wicked heart! An angelic, an ingenuous mind, is

ever delighted with good, out of itself, as well as in itself. It derives a divine pleasure from all the pleasure and perfection it can discern in any that are around it.

2. Again; if such be the joy of the saints above, at *our* virtue and repentance; what a reproach and condemnation must it be, what a hellish disposition, in any of *us*, to tempt and encourage one another to what is evil, vitious, or extravagant! Does Heaven itself sell a joy, at the conversion of sinful, foolish man? What then must those lewd companions have to answer for, who become the seducers and destroyers of others; who make it their sport and their pastime, to draw aside a brother, a fellow Christian, into vanity, misery, and ruin!

Thus much I had to say upon the *subjects* of this celestial joy:---The last point I purposed to speak to, was the *measure*, and *comparative degree* of it; and to shew you what our Lord could mean by declaring, 'that there will be more of this joy in Heaven, on account of one man who has grossly sinned and afterwards repented, than of great numbers of just persons who do not want such repentance.'

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At first sight you may be apt to think it a strange paradox, 'that a continued life of virtue should not be preferred to a state of repentance; that not to sin at all, should not be far better, than first to sin, and then to amend that sin. As if a recovery from sickness should cause more pleasure, than a constant period of health and strength; or to be perfectly sound, and need no remedy, should not be more desirable, than to labour under diseases, and recover by the use of physic.' Could this be true, a man would embrace the very thing the great Apostle condemns---"let us sin, that grace may abound; let us do evil, that good may come of it." But here I say, as the Apostle himself did, "God forbid!" Our Saviour's doctrine carries in it no such meaning, no such absurdity. For if by the "just persons who need no repentance," you suppose him to intend such men as the *Pharisees*; furious zealots, empty of all virtues, but conceited enough to fancy themselves in full possession of them; the sense will then be clear and true---'that the condition of an humble penitent for even long and heinous transgressions, is far better than that of such a man

as

‘as this.’ The humilily and future good endeavours of the one, will restore and exalt him; while the pride and ignorance of the other, will still more and more debase him.

But the chief of these three parables will inform you, in what a right and proper acceptance, our Lord may be understood to speak here of the *general comparative* circumstances of the repenting sinner, and the habitually sober and upright man: and he seems to have pointed the conclusion of that parable, to the obviating and preventing this very objection. When the elder son came home, and found what rejoicing was made at the return of his prodigal brother; the mistaken man, you read, was disgusted, and fell into expostulation with the good father: “Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandments; and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this thy son was come, who hath devoured thy living with harlots; thou hast killed for *him* the fatted calf.” And was not the answer a most natural and rational one, and sufficient to silence all complaint? “Son, *thou* art ever
“with

"with me; and all that I have is thine:" my best fortunes, my best affections, are thine. And take notice, I pray you, of the following words---"It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad; for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found." It was 'meet that we should be glad'---not more, upon the *whole*, than for *thee*; but more at this particular *time*, on this particular *occasion*, which is unexpected and surprising: for "thy brother was dead, and is alive again; was lost, and is found." Certainly a sincere and uniform perseverance in the religious life, is the most desirable and happy condition in the world; the most amiable object of the joy of Heaven, and of the divine love---of a love always great, constant, calm and steady, and superior to all other. But because sudden and unforeseen blessings are wont to throw *us men* into transports of affection; therefore the scripture language, as I remarked to you just now, condescends to adapt itself to *our* conceptions, and notions of things: "there shall be more joy in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than

"over

"over ninety and nine just persons who need
"no repentance."

And here again let us stop, and make a just reflection.

What a merciful and impartial desire have
Almighty God and our blessed Redeemer
expressed, in the whole Gospel Covenant,
of the recovery and salvation of *all sorts of*
men! These three parables, beside other
passages without number, speak this plain
truth, if there be any truth at all in God.

As therefore, in all reason and philosophy,
if man be a moral and a rational being, there
can be no such thing as absolute fate or ne-
cessity upon any man's actions; so, in reli-
gion, if the Bible may be relied on, there
can be no such thing as arbitrary and uncon-
ditional reprobation of any man's person.
For look, I request you, how inconsistent,
how shocking must such a doctrine appear!
—that even Heathens and Publicans should
all be so kindly invited, so cheerfully encou-
raged, so warmly persuaded, to come into the
kingdom of God; and yet the far greater
part of Christians, *members* of that kingdom,
should from eternity be registered in the
kingdom

kingdom of Darkness and of Death! That our blessed conqueror of sin and death, the Saviour Jesus, should proclaim a general pardon, an universal grace and peace; should call every soul, the most sinful of souls, to come under the healing of his wings, into his extensive salvation; and yet at last, at the great day of accounts, a book of fatal decrees, a roll of eternal destiny, should be brought forth, shewing the inevitable doom of death to those very men to whom "repentance unto life" had been plainly and openly preached, and of vengeance to the wretched people to whom the terms of mercy had been so tenderly held forth! If, I say, a doctrine like this be founded in scripture, or can fairly be drawn from it; what must become of the honour of God; or where would be the credit and the truth of the Gospel! I am only pleading, you see, that God is just, and must and ought to be understood so in all the Gospel representations of him; and that punishment and destruction, wherever they fall, come from ourselves.

And now to conclude---If these charming encouragements of Heaven should have no influence

influence over the hearts of lewd and sinful men, towards their amendment and repentance; what can God do more, or what can man expect? Threatening and terrors, ruin and destruction, are awakening arguments indeed. But they are arguments of the meanest kind; they affect only the lowest and least amiable principles of our human nature; they work entirely upon the passions, upon mere interest and fear. Whereas love and forgiveness, free pardon, generous and merciful invitation, ought to operate with a nobler power upon a rational mind: *they* should win the most stubborn spirit, and melt down the hardest heart into contrition, and a sense of its duty!

Why should you think it too early, or too late, to return to your Father's house; when the best robe is ready for you, and the ring to put upon your finger? And, above all, how can you venture to delay your repentance; when, though the feast be indeed prepared for you, you cannot tell how soon your provocations may cause the door to be for ever shut against you? Begin this work then, while it is called to-day: do it for
God's

God's sake, for your own sakes, and for all Heaven's sake ! And this know for certain ; ---that there will, there *must*, be joy *somewhere*, at what we shall all come to, for good or for evil. Oh therefore ! let it not be the joy of Devils, insulting over us, as partners of their endless misery ; but let it be the joy of Angels, the joy of all wise and good creatures, receiving us into their blessed society, and giving us a welcome into the everlasting habitations !

To God, only wise, &c.

and giving us a welcome into the everlasting
tune, sounding to us their glad society,
of angels, the joy of all wise and good crea-
of their angelic choir; but let it be the joy
of the world, reaching over us, as partners
of the world. Oh, therefore, let it not be the
world, at what we shall become to, for good
- that there will, there will be joy for
- heaven's sake! And this know for certain,
God's sake, for your own sake, and for all

XX [305] R 3.2

SERMON XX.

JOHN vii. 17.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.

IN the fourteenth verse of this chapter, we find our blessed Saviour in the temple at Jerusalem, upon a solemn festival, and in a numerous assembly, preaching his gospel to the Jewish people. And it appears by what follows, that he did it with so much strength and clearness of argument, with such evidence of truth, and with a gravity and authority so becoming a divine teacher; that it struck astonishment into all the audience. Even the warmest opposers and worst enemies of his doctrine were amazed, and began to raise enquiries about him;—enquiries, which yet were not so much the effect of wonder, as of malice and ill-nature: “how knoweth

“ this man letters, having never learned?”
 ‘ how comes this man to understand any thing
 ‘ of *scripture*, who was never brought up to
 ‘ the study of it, and never was a pupil to any
 ‘ Doctor of our Law? How comes *he* to
 ‘ pretend to expound prophecies, who never
 ‘ belonged to the school of any Scribe, but is
 ‘ the son of an ordinary tradesman, and was
 ‘ brought up a carpenter?’ All this was said
 to detract, as much as might be, from the
 very lessons they ought the more highly to
 have extolled!

The text, and the verse before it, and what
 follows, are a proper return, which our Lord
 makes to these invidious questions: “ My
 “ doctrine is not mine, but *his* that sent me.”
 ‘ I am no dealer in the comments of Rabbies,
 ‘ but a messenger of the plain will and reve-
 ‘ lation of God.’ Moreover, these words of
 the text contain the *reason*, both why those
 Jews treated our blessed Master and his
 preaching with such impious contempt; and
 also why the dissolute part of mankind in *ge-
 neral*, do not perceive and acknowledge the
 truth of his doctrine, from the miracles that
 confirm it, and from the nature, design, and
 spirit of the doctrine itself. They point out
 a certain

a certain *quality*, a certain *temper of mind*, required in every man to enable him to discern what doctrine is true and divine; and are an excellent rule whereby all persons may either try themselves, or judge safely of other men, with respect to the choice of their religion: "If any man will do his will, he shall" (or he *will*) "know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

My purpose, in what follows, is

I. To set this disposition, this "desire to do the will of God," in its proper light.

II. To shew you the effect it will have upon a man: "he will know of the doctrine whether it be of God,"

III. To apply this rule to the case of such as come under it.

First then: Here is a certain temper of mind, indispensably requisite to qualify every man to judge rightly of any religious doctrine, and to give us any hope, either that he will find out the truth at all, or that he will attend to, and be guided by it, when he has found it. St. Paul has expressed the whole of this exceedingly well; and *his* words are a sufficient comment upon these of our *Saviour*; "He that cometh to God,"

says the Apostle, " must believe that he is, " and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Whoever would enquire into any religion with a prospect of success, must be previously convinced of the being and providence of the supreme governor of the world: he must be fully satisfied of his obligation to search after the will of that governor, to form his conduct according to it, and to expect the certain fruits and consequences either of his dutiful observance, or his wilful transgression of it. No man thinks of God to any purpose, who does not think of him as the Lord and Father of rational creatures, and the rewarder or punisher of their moral actions in justice and righteousness. And wherever these thoughts do not produce an unfeigned desire to learn and obey the laws of this God; *there* religion is only thought of, and talked of, as a mere *amusement*, and a vain curiosity: and such men are quite out of the question, in all enquiries about true and false doctrines. They, in short, who have no fixed principles of piety at all, to *them* all doctrines are alike; and they can be no proper judges of any of them.

Again;

Again; to make this disposition truly effectual, it must carry a man to a diligent and impartial examination into *whatever may at any time* be proposed to him as *coming from God*: or, in other words, he must judge and determine what is real religion, as becomes a rational and an honest man. Truth must be his only aim, because the God of truth is his great object. If he would pursue truth, he must first clear the road to it: he must remove the prejudices, that have prepossessed his mind: he must be willing to consider, again and again, whatever opinions may have confused and clouded his understanding. But, above all things, he must guard against those carnal passions, and that variety of worldly lusts, which we all know do so terribly bribe the will, and corrupt the heart of man. Or, if he has contracted any habit of these, he must consent to part with them, and be brought to reform them, before ever his mind can become a clear stage for truth and piety to act upon. Religious truths are matters of the purest reason, as well as of the highest consequence: and a right judgment about them, and a regular conformity of practice to them, is the completion of wisdom and

virtue. Vicious habits, worldly ambition, and all narrow prejudices, cramp and debase the faculties that should raise us to the light and the love of them. Nay, for a man to take up with the notions of others, be they never so rational, without a conscientious enquiry into the reasonableness of them, is absolutely to lose all their praise and value as to *himself*. It is to be in the right by chance, not by any merit of his own; and like one that walks the right road in perfect darkness; uncertain how long he shall continue in it, and liable to a thousand accidents that may turn him out of it, and lead him into a wilderness, or into the deep.

This innocence and uprightness of soul, with which every man ought to approach his Maker, and to apply his thoughts to religious subjects, is most admirably well represented by the author of the Book of Wisdom: "Think of the Lord with a good heart, and in simplicity of heart seek him. For he will be found of them that tempt him not. For into a malicious soul wisdom will not enter, nor dwell in the body that is subject unto sin. For the holy spirit of discipline will flee deceit, and re-
 " move

“move from thoughts that are without understanding, and will not abide when unrighteousness cometh in.”

II. Having thus considered that sincerity and integrity, which our Saviour here makes to be the foundation of all right judgment concerning what is the will of God, or concerning any religious doctrine; let us in the next place observe the influence and effect, which it will be sure to have upon the minds of men: “He shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God;” or rather he *will* know, and judge rightly of it: he will *naturally*, and of *course*, discover a true doctrine from a false one. A plain unlearned man, of this ingenuous spirit, will easily perceive the difference between pure nature and corrupt artifice; between a doctrine of morality, and one of mere power and policy. By the notions he has of God, and by his own love of real goodness, he will soon see what is worthy of God, and tends to the benefit of human society; and will quickly distinguish it from imposture, and the selfish inventions of men.

The proposition is delivered in *general* terms: “If *any* man,” says our Lord, “will

"do his will, he will know of the doctrine,
 "whether it be of God." But this asser-
 tion, like many others of the same kind, is
 not to be taken so absolutely, as to admit of
 no limitation. Any man, who is blest with
 an opportunity of having the truth fairly pro-
 posed to him, and with sufficient understand-
 ing to judge of it;—any man, who is not
 overborne by some unavoidable ignorance, or
 unhappy prejudices of mind, or who can and
 will by care and attention see and remove
 those prejudices, and rectify his mistakes
 by the light that is afforded him;—any
 and every person, so qualified, will find out
 the will of God;—find out, not every
 truth, and avoid every error, and become in-
 fallible---that is a degree of perfection, not
 attainable by the best of mortal men. But,
 as the Holy Spirit was promised to "guide
 the Apostles into all truth;" that is, into
 all such knowledge, as was necessary for the
 fulfilling of their ministry: so, in the same
 sense, this worthy Christian will be drawn
 into no gross and wicked and pernicious er-
 rors: he will see and follow so much truth,
 as will be abundantly sufficient to recommend
 him to God, and procure him salvation: his
 endeavours,

endeavours, though imperfect, shall be accepted; and his mistakes will be graciously overlooked, and mercifully pardoned. We cannot possibly determine, what incurable darkness may be thrown around some very sincere hearts, by education, custom, authority and example; so as to debar entrance to that light; and measure of faith, which another man in a happier situation would readily embrace. In all these cases, God is the just and favourable judge. Those hearts are in *his* tender hands, who is the searcher of all hearts, and will require no more of any man, than what he in his righteous providence hath given him.

In fine then: As when our Saviour tells us, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned;" we do not, and can not, suppose him to mean, that 'all baptized Christians without distinction are saved, and that 'all others without exception are damned,' (which would be a monster of an assertion) but that 'they, who have the Christian faith clearly laid before them, and thankfully receive it, are saved by it; and that they, and 'they *only*, who have it so laid before them, and

‘and yet wilfully reject it, will be condemned;’---thus, I say, are we to interpret the rule in the text: ‘any man, who has competent abilities, and will diligently and virtuously make use of them for learning true religion when offered to his thoughts, will certainly see it, and understand it; at least he will see so much of it, as will avail to the discharge of his duty, and the saving his soul.’

III. I have now shewn you, as briefly as I could, what a man must be, what temper of mind he must have, and how far such a temper will enable him to form a right judgment in any point of religious doctrine that may be proposed to him. The rule, as explained from our Saviour’s words, is an easy, and a most useful one; applicable to all persons, of whatever age, rank, denomination, or condition. The unbeliever may be tried, and the believer may estimate the value of his faith, by it. It will decide *their* case, who disallow the revelation of the Gospel; and so it will *theirs*, who profess to acknowledge and obey the laws of it. All may have it, and indeed none can pretend to refuse it, as their unerring guide in all enquiries.

Fnr

For example, if those Jews of our *Saviour's* time, had been men of virtue and impartiality; if, as our Lord told them, "they had had the love of God abiding in them;" if they had searched their own prophecies, not according to the spurious traditions of their Scribes and Rabbins, but with spiritual instead of temporal views; if their affections had been set upon the kingdom of Heaven, instead of the power and luxuries of an earthly monarchy;---they would have seen their Messiah in their own scriptures, in the characters of a spiritual saviour and a moral deliverer; and would have seen those characters completely verified in the blessed Jesus, from the greatness of his works, and the heavenly excellence of his doctrine. In like manner, if any *modern Jew* will examine into Christianity, not by the representations given of it by Popish churches, or any ignorant Christian authors; but as it lies in the New Testament itself, compared with the ancient prophecies; he will either see and "know of the doctrine that it is of God;" or of his *own* God, of the God of *Abraham*; or if, in his best judgment, and after all his fairest enquiries, he *cannot* see it to be so, God will deal

deal with his blindness in mercy, for Abraham's sake, and for his own mercy's sake.

So again; if any *Deist*, truly believing in God, and his government of the world, and honestly pursuing his own (so far good) principles, will look into the religion of the scripture, and measure it, not by the systems of this or that church, or the schemes and commentaries of this or that set of expositors, but by the plain words of Christ and his Apostles; he will find in it no absurdities, no impossible mysteries, no shocking propositions; but a method for the pardon and salvation of men, worthy of a just and gracious governor of rational creatures: he will find in it laws, duties, and conditions, all equitable and beneficial: he will see his own admired natural religion wrought up to its greatest perfection, and fenced and fortified with the noblest sanctions and encouragements. In one word; he will find nothing but the most generous virtue aimed at, nothing but vice discountenanced and threatened: which never was, nor ever can be, the view of a *deceiver* and an *impostor*.

Nay farther; this rule will direct even Christians themselves, in framing their doctrines

trines from holy scripture, and in correcting the errors which some of them may have falsely built upon that foundation of truth. Thus if any *Papist*, truly desirous to know the *mind* of God and Christ, could be brought to seek for it in, and to receive it from, the *words* of God and Christ, interpreted by the maxims of common reason, not perverted by councils and human traditions; if he would once rouse up so much of the sense and spirit of a man, as to allow God alone to be infallible, and *men* to be at liberty to examine what *other* men say; it were impossible he should think that 'a Priest can turn Bread 'into a God,' or be ridiculous enough to believe that 'his God may be eaten.' But, above all, he could never so grossly mistake in the *practical* part of his Christianity, as to imagine that a religion of peace and love, and the cause of a Saviour of mercy and loving kindness, can ever be advanced by persecution and fire and sword, and that destroying God's creatures can be doing God service. It is the very same thing among *Protestants*, and with respect to all other remarkable errors in our holy religion. He that will suffer his reason to take place, when he thinks

or

or reads of God, as the just judge of all the earth, ever doing right, and rewarding every man according to his works, will soon know of the doctrine of unconditional *predestination* whether *it* "can come from God," or can possibly be drawn from scripture.

And in every case, and every instance, the rule will hold good. All understandings are not alike, nor is the same improvement expected from them: but with every man this is certain;--that 'sincerity and sobriety, 'good intentions and good desires, and an 'industrious and impartial exercise of his reason, are the only qualities that will prevent 'or rectify his errors, and conduct him into 'saving truth.'

I shall conclude with a remark or two upon what has been said, which I hope may appear to deserve your attention.

And first; if piety towards God, and the terms and qualifications requisite for knowing the way to please and serve him, be so reasonable, and so obvious; this shews you both the common cause, and particularly the great inexcuseableness, of *infidelity*. Give us but a mind disposed to duty; do but clear away the lusts and vicious inclinations of men;

men; and it will *then* presently appear to them, what is most rational for them to believe, and what it is their true interest to practice. But *till* then, they are no fair disputants in the cause; and desire *not* to believe, only because they love to be wicked. And there is nothing more preposterous and vain, than a lewd and profligate man arguing about religion, and points of faith;---like those old crazy levellers, who quarrelled, and confounded the nation, about laws, and rights, and property; while they themselves were determined to be governed by no laws at all!

Secondly; let us hence observe, upon what a just and equitable foot our blessed Lord has put the case of mens faith and salvation: how unexceptionable the condition is---only this, that 'every man prepare his heart to receive the truth, and be ready to do his best 'towards finding out the will of God.' Wherever this is honestly done, in vain do we judge and condemn an unbeliever for what he is only unhappy, not criminal, in not believing: and unspeakably great is the comfort and peace of every mind, thus conscious of its own integrity!

Thirdly,

Thirdly, and lastly; let us here see, with what perfect righteousness and mercy the doom of all men will be fixed by our supreme judge, at the future and solemn day of accounts: when every good man shall receive, and look upon his "crown of glory," as the proper and bountiful reward of his faithful endeavours to please and serve his Maker; and every wicked and lost creature will inwardly feel and acknowledge, that *his* misery and condemnation came not from the want of understanding, but from the neglect and abuse of it; and that he is left in darkness, only because he wilfully shut the eyes which God had opened. So has the Book of Wisdom set forth the last end of such men: "and when they cast up the accounts of their sins, they shall come with fear; and their own iniquities shall convince them to their face."

To God, only wise, be glory and honour through Jesus Christ.

SERMON XXI.

MATTHEW XXV. 14--19.

The kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.---- After a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.

THIS is one of those parables wherein our blessed Saviour, by a plain and familiar comparison, sets forth the nature and design of the present life of man, under the wise dispensations of God, the supreme governor of all rational creatures; and particularly under the great and last dispensation of the Gospel of Christ.

This Gospel the holy scriptures call the *kingdom of God*, and the *kingdom of Heaven*; because it contains the morals, rules, and spiritual laws, by which the lives of men are

to be directed in this world, in order to their advancement and perfection in a future and *heavenly* state.

Agreeably to this end, all men in every age and nation, and Christians especially under the Gospel, are compared in one parable (Luke xvi.) to *stewards*, that have a trust of great importance committed to them, and are hereafter to give an account of their good or bad management of it to the common Lord who put it into their hands, and are to be treated by him according to their respective deserts.

In the parable before us, the metaphor is that of a master of a large and wealthy family; who, on taking a long journey, distributed his cash in divers measures or *talents* to his servants, to be industriously employed by them till his return; when he intended to reckon with them, and to reward them with preferments suited to their abilities, and the improvements that each of them had made; and to punish the negligence and abuses of such as served him ill.

Now the principal considerations which these parables point out to us, for our careful and serious attention, are such as these:

I. That

I. That the present life of Christians, and of all mankind, according to the Gospel account, is a state of probation and trial of their good or bad conduct; for which conduct they are each of them to be rewarded or punished in a *future* and more lasting condition.

II. What are those several goods or talents, *that* charge or stewardship, which God, by Christ, hath committed to our trust.

III. With what wisdom and goodness these talents are distributed to several men, to several Christians, in their various measures and degrees.

IV. The perfect justice and equity of that reckoning, to which we shall all be called, at the great day of judgment.

First then: The present life of man is here represented as a state of discipline and probation, with a view to some future and more lasting condition.

There cannot be a stronger recommendation of the scripture account of men and things, than that it always speaks what is agreeable to the sentiments of the wisest and most considerate persons. All true *philosophy* has ever set forth our present life under this very notion. Nor can any judicious person

think otherwise of it, when he reflects on the nature and excellent use of the human faculties, and the short space of time allowed us *here* to exercise and cultivate them; the various offices and stations we are placed in; the numerous, but different, opportunities we have of doing good or evil; the numberless changes and accidents we are liable to; the plenty, and fullness of good things, that some enjoy; and the pains and sufferings which abundance of others, as worthy, perhaps more valuable than *they*, are obliged to undergo. And what do all these, and many more observations, plainly speak, but this;---that we have a variety of parts to act upon the present short stage of the world, for carrying on the wise and just and merciful designs of the supreme providence and government? And since we all see that the scene of providence is not closed up, nor the purposes of divine justice and goodness ripened and brought to perfection, in distributions of happiness or misery, agreeably to the merits of free and reasonable creatures;--since, I say, we all see that this is not done in the present life, it is nothing short of a moral demonstration, that this

this is a state of *education* only, for another and more durable one that is to succeed.

Some persons may weakly imagine, that whatever creature, capable of virtue and happiness, comes out of the hands of the great and good Creator, ought to be brought into being, by such an hand, in all its possible perfections, and be launched into its absolute and full happiness at once. "For why should
"infinite power delay or deny any perfection,
"any felicity; or why should infinite goodness set a tax and a price of labour, trials,
"and sufferings upon it?" But the reason is very plain for the quite contrary side, both on God's part, and on ours. In the mere abstract notion of unlimited power, God could certainly have done so, if he had pleased. He could have framed all creatures at first in the same class of being, and have put them all into exactly equal states and conditions. Nay, he could so over-rule, and forcibly sway their minds and inclinations, that none of them should ever be capable of doing any evil, of knowing any guilt, or feeling any punishment. But what then would be the consequence of all this? Why, that there could be no *variety* of creatures at all: for all (upon

this supposition) would be precisely alike. Nor could there be, in any one of them, any *virtue*, any proper obedience, any real worth, any the least merit of the divine love and favour. For the nature and essence of virtue (the only object of God's love, the only qualification whereby his creatures can glorify him) consists in a wise and free choice of truth and right, and in an habitual practice of it influenced by *moral motives*. And, indeed, to suppose rational creatures put into a state of happiness, without any previous trial of their behaviour, any opportunities of doing wrong as well as right, would take away all the glory of God's creation. He would be the Lord (it is true) and the mighty Creator of such beings; but he could be no *moral* governor, no judge, no "rewarder of them that diligently seek him," where there were no liberty, no rational obedience,

Nor is this all. A state of trial seems to be absolutely requisite towards the true and proper felicity of reasonable and free creatures. The pleasures of mere animals are felt without any addition of reflection, to sweeten them. But the high taste, and the noble relish, which an intelligent being hath of *his* happiness,

happiness, is derived from a sense that he himself *attained* it, by his own voluntary good and generous actions. To remember you had a hand in your own rise and advancement; that you had a struggle for the crown, and had it placed upon your *head* for the real worth and valuable qualities of your *heart*;—*this* is what makes Heaven to be Heaven indeed, and gives it that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory!

And thus the wise God puts us upon our trial, and into a life of discipline, as well for our own benefit, as for *his* good pleasure.

These reasons then you have to offer in reply to those, who would suggest as if it were strange for the supreme governor to train up his creatures to happiness by steps of trial, and degrees of probation. You see the same wisdom in this *divine* proceeding, as in the maxims of all good and well formed government even among *yourselves*. No prudent father will trust his child very far, till he has educated and *tried* him. No prince will promote a subject to high posts, before he has given some proofs of his fidelity. God is the best of all fathers, the wisest of all governors: and therefore cannot be supposed to

advance his rational children and servants to bliss and reward, but by the exercise of their honour and duty towards him*. And when he deals by us all, as he did by the Israelites in the Wilderness; it is but a parallel, and a just case--"thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no." Not that the all-knowing God wants any *information* what any of us are, how we shall behave, or "what is in our hearts." No! his trial of us, is for our *own* good; and is as necessary for ourselves (to improve us in virtue, and make us exemplary to others) as it is suitable to the measures of his own government.

And were you to leave your own case, and to look abroad into all the numberless worlds, and into the state of other creatures, around you;---if you look up to Heaven itself; the case is *there* the same as with *you*. In all the

* The prophet Malachi has set this very argument in the plainest and strongest light: "If I be a father, where is mine honour; and if I be a master, where is my fear, saith the Lord of Hosts?"

the highest probability, there is neither the lowest Cherub, nor the most exalted Archangel, but has gone through his state of discipline and probation. They have all been raised to glory by degrees; their crowns have been the prize of their victories; and the honours they now enjoy, are the fruit of their former virtues. The sacred scriptures plainly intimate as much to us, in the *contrary* case of the *fallen* angels. Why were *they* thrust down, and are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness;" but because "they kept not their first estate"--did not behave well in their first posts, under their first trial. It is by no means necessary to believe, or even to imagine, that they were at the beginning created *men*, as *we* are: but, whatever they were, a probationary state they had; or else they could not have fallen from it. Nay, and even those angels who stood their ground, and "kept their first estate," and are preferred to higher state;--even *they* are, and must still be, in a constant probation. They are blest with the divine love and favour, only as long as they continue *good*; and *goodness* supposes freedom of choice, and a right use of an unrestrained will. And to be absolutely
incapable

incapable of moral evil, is the sole prerogative of that God, the Father of Spirits, of whom alone it is true, that "he only is holy," he "only is good," "without variableness, or shadow of turning."

Enough, I hope, may have been said on the first head, drawn from these parables, to convince you that all Christians, and all mankind, in this present life, are candidates for a further and a future state, with *talents* and a *stewardship* committed to their care; and how right and reasonable it is, that they should be so.

Let us now consider, II. "*What* are the "goods, the talents, and the stewardship, "with which God has intrusted us in this "first stage of our being." And these I place in *two* ranks; the one whereof are committed in common to all men; the other to some particular persons.

I. Reason and understanding, liberty of acting, and some opportunities or other of doing good, and of promoting the ends of that wise providence which placed us together in the world on purpose that we might make each other happy;---these, I say, are bestowed upon *men in general*. The light of
God's

God's word, and the assistance of his spirit, are the common privilege of *all Christians*.

Reason (whatever contempt some men in their heat of dispute may throw upon it) is a noble *talent*. It is what "teaches us more than the beasts of the earth, and makes us wiser than the fowls of Heaven." It is what leads us to the knowledge of God our Creator, enables us to think of him with duty and reverence, to adore and imitate his moral excellencies, and thereby to honour and glorify him. It is a light of God's own setting up, the "candle of the Lord" in the breast of every man: it is the guide to true religion, and the interpreter of all its rules and laws. They that use it rightly, are faithful and profitable servants to the God that gave it: and they that cloud and corrupt it, are always inexcusable. So argues St. Paul, even in respect of the ancient *Heathens*: "He hath made all nations of men--to dwell on the face of the earth--to seek the Lord, and feel after him, and find him--in whom they live and move and have their being."

The word of God, when added to the natural reason of man, gives to all *Christians* a still nobler *talent*, and makes them *Stewards* of

of a more wonderful and " manifold grace of " God." For the authority of a divine revelation dispels all the clouds, clears up all the doubts, that mens reason may have been darkened with, through ignorance, superstition, and vice. It sets the mind at ease in its apprehensions of the nature and attributes of the Deity, and in the measures of his dispensations towards us. The plainness and usefulness of all the rules of life prescribed in that word, render our Christian duty easy and delightful, and cause religion to appear as a most pleasant, because a most rational thing. To study the contents of this word of God; to meditate upon its great truths; to labour to understand them; to apply them to ourselves, carefully and conscienciously; --- to hearken to the promises, to fear the threatenings, and work our hearts to an habitual practice of the precepts, of this Gospel;--- *this is the grand task, the common stewardship,* of all Christians.

When again, to the light of his word, God superadds the assistance of his holy spirit; he expects still greater returns of increase, greater industry towards the improvement of the whole man---towards governing
aright

aright every affection of the mind, and desire of the heart--towards keeping every passion in decent restraint, and raising and advancing the soul to that resemblance and image of God, which is created by righteouness and true holiness.

2. *Other* talents, I said, are bestowed upon, and confined to, *particular* persons. Thus, to some God is pleased to allot a fortune of great riches and plenty; to cultivate in them the godlike qualities of bounty, beneficence and mercy, towards those objects, whom the same divine wisdom intends to qualify for Heaven by the exercise of patience, and generous resignation to his sacred will and providence.

To others are intrusted the superior gifts of power, honour, and authority; for promoting his kingdom of righteousness in the earth, by doing justice, and shewing judgment to those that are below them, and depend upon the law of their mouths.

Again; to many is given the "word of wisdom," in learning and eminent knowledge; for the benefit and instruction of abundantly more, to whom the all-wise providence hath assigned *lower talents* of mind; that

that so *all* kinds of virtue may be exercised, and all righteousness be fulfilled;---by the humanity and justice, the meekness and condescension of the upper part, and by the humility, contentment, teachableness, and obedience of the lower part of mankind.

And to all the persons, on whom these high talents are conferred, what a strict charge has the great Lord given, by himself, or by his Apostles! That of St. Paul to one rank of them, is an excellent and perfect pattern for all the rest. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God---that they do good--be ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

Charge them that are invested with authority and power, that they remember *whose ministers they are*---"the ministers of God for good---for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." Bid them "take heed what they do: for they judge not for man, but for the Lord."

In

In like manner, charge them that are *learned* in this world, that they be not “exalted above measure;” that they be not haughty to the more ignorant; but that they be gentle, free, and communicative; “in meekness instructing all;” “apt to teach;” not wasting their learning in frivolous disputes, but employing it to explain the great and necessary truths of the everlasting Gospel.

And, in the same strain, let *me* humbly entreat and *charge* you all, to whom God has given reason and understanding, his holy word, and his blessed spirit; to remember what great gifts and *talents* all these are; and that our Lord is coming in due time, to call us all to a reckoning!

To him be glory for ever! Amen.

In like manner, charges upon the world, that they be not "enriched above measure," that they be not brought into more ignorance; but that they be gentle, free, and communicative, in teaching others. "My will," saith he, "is that ye teach;" not waiting till learning is in various degrees, but en-joining it to each in the great and necessary truths of the everlasting Gospel.

And, in the same strain, let us humbly present and pour forth you all, to whom God has given reason and understanding, his holy word, and his blessed Spirit, to remember what great gifts and talents all these are; and that our Lord is coming in due time to call us all to a reckoning. To him be glory for ever, Amen.

SERMON XXII.

MATTHEW XXV. 14--19.

The kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.

19. *After a long time, the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.*

THAT almighty God is the wise governor, Lord, and judge of all intelligent creatures, as well as the creator of them, is a truth which right *reason*, would naturally teach us. And that such creatures and servants should be trained up by Him to gradual advancements in happiness, by the exercise of their virtue in a life of trial and probation; by a free use of their intellectual faculties, and a rational unrestrained choice of truth

and righteousness;---is as highly agreeable to the nature of things, as to the doctrine of christianity.

This was the *first* thing I observed to be contained in this, and the like parables of our Saviour.

And as every such being is supposed to have certain powers, and opportunities of action, whereby to promote the service and honour of the great Master, under the name of *talents*, and *stewardships* and *gifts*, and *graces*; ---I have, in the second head, considered *what* these powers are, either with respect to men and christians in *general*, or to particular and distinguished persons.

I now proceed to the *third consideration*, pointed out to us for our serious attention in these discourses of our blessed Lord;---namely,

III. The wise and gracious *manner* in which God, by Christ, has distributed these talents, and divided out this stewardship, to various men, to various christians, in their several measures and degrees.

In the fourteenth verse of this chapter, the evangelist calls them all by the general term of *goods*; and goods are of many different sorts and kinds. In the fifteenth and following

ing verses, he names them *talents*: and though talents be all of the same weight, and of the same value; yet they are not given to all men in the same *number*. And so is the wisdom of God displayed, in trying and proving us as candidates for future glory and reward, both by the various qualities, and by the different numbers of the gifts He bestows upon us in the present life.

Some persons may be apt to consider it as an object against providence, and the christian scheme of divine government, that all men, of all ages, should not be put upon a *level*, as to their talents, gifts and graces. “ For
“ what is one man, or one age of men, by
“ *nature* preferable to another? Why then
“ should one receive more than another from
“ the hand of *Him*, who is allowed to be no
“ respecter of persons, and is able to give
“ abundantly to *all*? But this way of reasoning is built upon the falsest foundation in the world. It is granted that, naturally speaking, all men, nay all creatures, not only on earth but in heaven too, and through the whole universe, are thus far upon the level, that their being, and all their powers, are the free gift of God:---None of them

could claim, or merit, to *be* what they *are*, or to *enjoy* what they *have*: all are equally dependent on the will of the supreme benefactor. But this objection supposes it to be unfit for God to “do what he pleases with his own”; and the absurdities that flow from it, are of the grossest kind. If I may justly complain, that I have not the accomplishments of some other men; I may, with equal reason, lament that I did not live in the state of paradise. And upon the same foot Adam, who was created there, when he cast his eye up to heaven, might have murmured because *he* was not made an angel; nay, and every lower angel might think it hard that *he* was not made an archangel; and even the archangel himself, that *he* alone was not next to God, or equal to the only Son of God. The same Wisdom that made a difference in the variety of it's creatures, makes a difference likewise in the conditions of men.

In the present state of human life in particular, is the divine beauty of providence displayed, in the diversity of our *talents*, situations, and abilities. We are to be educated for heaven by the temper of our minds, and the habitual practice of many virtues. Now,
how

how many instances of human virtue would lose their place, and their very being, if all men were upon an equality? For example; if all were upon the level in understanding, and knowledge; what room would be left for generous assistance, instruction and communication of learning, and the good offices of "edifying one another in love"? If all were rich and great and honourable and powerful alike, there could be no such graces as charity and beneficence, no bowels of compassion, no condescension, nor "doing justice", nor "loving mercy", on the one part; nor humility, contentment, submission and patience, gratitude, obedience, or loyalty on the other part of mankind.

So then, as when you view your fields, and your gardens, you think it no deformity, but rather a beauty, that one plant and one flower excells others, in colour and in stature; and when you behold the heavens, the work of God's hand, you are not drawn to contempt; but to admiration of the great author of nature, that one planet is larger than another, and "one star differeth from another in glory"; so in this our *moral* world, you find, that different talents, offices, and stations, are

the ground of many virtues, for the happiness of man, and the honour of God.

The same reasoning will hold good, with respect to God's distributions of light and knowledge to several nations, in divers manners and degrees. All have their gifts: none are without their evidences of the divine power and goodness: of none shall be required any more, than a right use of what they know and understand. When God therefore, in holy scripture, is said to be "no respecter of persons", the meaning cannot be, that 'he either professes to give, or is bound to give, to all men equal talents, equal light, equal advantages'; but that 'he will impartially judge, and deal with every man, in exact proportion to the light and talents he has bestowed upon him',--will graciously "accept him according to what he *hath*, "and not according to what he *hath not*." This is divine justice; 'to confer it's favours in various measures, and then to judge us all by the use and improvement we each of us make of our several gifts'.

St. Paul's way of Stating this matter, in his second epistle to Timothy, is a very apt, and beautiful one. He compares the different ranks

ranks and orders of christians in the church of Christ, to the vessels, or household furniture, in some great person's family: "in a great house, there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth; some to honour, and some to dishonour"---some to more, others to less, honourable uses. But still all have their use in the family, and are all good in their kind. "If a man therefore purge himself from these" (from the vices and corruptions of the world about him) "he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work". A noble metaphor, and the *moral* is as noble! "Let but the meanest christian do the duty of his station and employ his talent well; and God will not fail to find him a place in his presence, and an habitation in his eternal kingdom".---This leads me, IV, to the fourth great truth contained in these discourses of our blessed Lord; namely, 'the perfect equity, justice, and mercy, of that account, which our heavenly Master will hereafter call us all to render up.'

As

As all men, in every age, under every dispensation of light and knowledge, are the servants and subjects of the one almighty Governor; they all, accordingly, have their respective *gifts*, and *talents* committed to them by *Him*. The mere endowment of reason and understanding is a weighty trust, and makes the lowest *Heathen* accountable to the hand that bestowed it. *Christianity* abounds with more, and larger graces; and makes us liable to a stricter account of improvements. The very qualifications of rational creatures, clearly bespeak the *ends* for which they were given: and to imagine that God will take no cognizance of their conduct in another life, is the same absurdity as to affirm, that He has assigned them no work, no duties, no talents, in the present one.

But what I would chiefly observe to you under this head is, ‘the equity, wisdom, and goodness, that will appear in those his future distributions’. Variety in the abilities and conditions of men, is what gives beauty to the divine government of mankind; for promoting amongst us the kingdom of virtue and righteousness. And exactly answerable to

to this difference in their powers, will be the account which Christ will demand, and the recompence he will graciously confer upon his several subjects hereafter. Though to the prime servant, who had gained his ten pounds, the government of ten cities was allotted; and to him that gained five, five cities in proportion; yet to the humbler servant, who could clear but *two* only, was the same divine and happy sentence returned—
“well done, thou good and faithful servant;
“enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” If he *was* not because he *could not be*, qualified for as high a post as his superiors; still he was to have what he was fit for; his proper proportion of joy; a joy as large as his qualifications could reach, equal to his taste, and adapted to his heart’s desire; a preferment that would infinitely outweigh his services, be above and beyond all his merits, or even his imaginations. So wise, impartial, and merciful, is God’s future judgment set forth, in this and all other parallel places of Scripture! They that live only by the light of the *natural law*, written in their hearts, shall be judged by *that law* alone; and shall rise or fall by the testimony of their own consciences,
either

either accusing or excusing them. And the honest Pagan, with his *one poor* talent, will have *his* sentence from the same judge of all the earth; who will not only do what is strictly *right*, but will do the highest bounties to the sons of men, in number, weight, and measure. And while the labours of the prophet, or the sufferings and fortitude of the martyr, shall be distinguished with the brightest crown; what a comfortable scripture is that which assures you, that even the "cup of cold water shall in no wise lose *it's* reward"! *JOHN 13:12*

Condemnation and future punishment is made the portion of two sorts of servants,---the wicked, and the slothful one. The parable before us is a most lively admonition to us all, that a man will be condemned, not only for being heinously *sinful*, and grossly *abusing* his faculties; but also for not actually endeavouring to do some *good* with them in the world. The man that had only *one* talent given him, though he did not squander it away, was nevertheless cast out, for *not trading* with it, and improving it. "Thou slothful servant---wherefore didst thou not put money to the exchangers---that I might have

“ have received my own with usury”? The meaning is, “ why did you not *employ* the money I delivered to you? I put little into your hands, and I expected little from you. But for that little, though your recompence would have been but in proportion, yet to you it would have been a great and most valuable blessing”. “ Take away therefore the talent from him---cast ye the *unprofitable* servant into outer darkness”.

This subject must not be dismissed, without some very useful reflections from the whole of what has been said upon it.

1. If this life be nothing but a *stewardship*, committed to our present trust and improvement; you see here the grand and important inquiry, that every considerate man ought to make with relation to himself; namely,

“ What are the *particular* goods, the *peculiar* talents, assigned *him* by providence; and what it is, that God requires of him in return”.

Before any man complains for *want* of talents, let him resolve this one question; “ whether he has not more already, than he has made a good use of”? And the next

wise

wise point to being contented with the talents we *have*, is to know and consider what those talents *are*. If this were tolerably well done, by men of all ranks; the world would be a scene of much happiness, and the honour and beauty of God's kingdom, even upon earth, would shine out with unspeakable lustre. Religion would appear a most amiable thing, through all the variety of mens lives and circumstances. The prince, and the man of authority, would become like a God to those he governs, by the exercise of the noblest train of virtues, that adorn and bless our human life. He would enact laws, that would speak his benevolence, rather than his power; his commands would be tender; his reproofs be given with meekness, without insult; and even his punishments would never want some evidence of pity and compassion.

The gentleman of independent fortune, and exempt from worldly drudgeries; far from that low but too common imagination, that he has a licence to be idle, and has nothing to do; would see before him a field of large and generous action; of study, to furnish his mind with sentiments worthy of his character; of employing, and relieving, the poor; of
well

well directing his own family, and educating his children; of influencing his whole neighbourhood to peace and harmony, to industry and sobriety.

Finally; the mechanic, and the very labourer for daily bread, by duly attending to *his own* talents, makes a figure in life far above contempt, and deserving true esteem. He is a member of the body civil, and religious; of the church, and the state; without whose help, without whose *hands*, the nobles could make no appearance, and the great ones of the earth could never shine. And as much as the one are so apt to lose by a life of vanity, of gaudy pomp, and idle amusements; so much the other may gain, by manly labour, patience, and contentment.

2. Well then; if you have any just notion of life, you will never look upon it in a *single* view, but will connect one life with another, and remember that 'dying is nothing else but an entrance upon another way of living'. This is a thought, that will set you above rioting upon present pleasures, or being uneasy under present labours, or mispending your proper talents.

3. Lastly;

3. Lastly, this idea of life, as a wise and equitable state of trial, will teach you, 'where the stress and spirit of all saving religion must lie, and upon what ground you must build all your expectation of future felicity and reward'. These parables shew you, that true piety does not consist in having *many* and *large* talents; but in an honest use of *your own* talents, be they greater, or smaller. They that place their hope of salvation in being merely *orthodox*, found it mostly upon a religion that *other men have made for them*: and * their noisy zeal about it, is nothing more than what knaves and fools of all religions are wont to shew. And such as please their own hearts with a strong faith, that 'God has *chosen* them to salvation before all other people', are very prone to neglect the *real gifts* which God has given them. These men would fain apply to themselves those joyful words of St. Paul, in his second epistle to Timothy: I have finished my course, I have

* These sermons were preached at a time when religious controversies ran high in the nation, and many men contended for points of faith, and the rights of the Church, with much zeal, and little charity—which gave occasion to this, and a few other similar passages in these discourses.

“ have kept the *faith*”. But by *faith* this apostle no where means a confident hope in the favour of God, or a bold reliance upon the merits of Christ. No! “ keeping the “ *faith*” is the same with “ finishing his “ course”: and if the word were rightly translated, it should be “ I have kept my *fidelity*”; I have been true to my *trust*, in a life of labour, and a conscientious improvement of the great *talent* with which God hath honoured me. And for all such, and for none but such, “ there is henceforth laid up “ a crown of righteousness, which the Lord “ the righteous judge will give at that day “ to all them that love his appearing.”.

To him be glory for ever! Amen.

[illegible]

ИОМЯЗЗ

SERMON XXIII.

JAMES iii. 17

The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

WISDOM is that noble disposition and power of mind, which carries a rational being to the choice of the best ends; and to the prosecution of them by the most natural, direct, and effectual means.

As happiness, or true pleasure, is the great and allowed object of all our actions; and as virtue and piety are the proper, and only adequate method of attaining it;---therefore, in the language of scripture, and agreeably to all reason and truth, serious and rational religion bears the character, and claims the title, of *wisdom*.

VOL. I.

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And hence the various schemes men have drawn out, and the rules they have laid down, in matters of religion, have been stiled the *wisdom* of this or that sect of men. So you read of the wisdom of the *philosophers*, the wisdom of *Solomon*, the wisdom of the *Son of Sirach*: and the antient Greeks gave the appellation of *wisemen* to such amongst them, as were the authors of important maxims and sentences of a moral and religious nature.

Moreover, as almighty God is the fountain of all knowledge, the supreme original of all that is excellent, of all reason and wisdom; it is with great propriety that St. James here calls the perfect religion of the Son of God the "*wisdom that is from above*"--- that scheme of morality, that principle of religious life, the model and absolute pattern whereof is in heaven, and the practice whereof will qualify us for, and lead us to, heaven.

It is a common observation, that all founders of a *new* religion must have some certain marks and characters, to distinguish it from others, and to recommend it to the world in preference to the *old ones*, which they suppose to be false or imperfect. Accordingly the apostle,

apostle, in these words of the text, has laid you down the particulars of that spirit and temper of mind, with which the religion of heaven will always inspire a sincere and upright man; and which are so many clear signs, that will ever distinguish christianity from all imposture, and a real believer from a mere pretender to faith.

My purpose, in what follows, is

I. To consider the characters themselves.

II. To shew you in what principal instances, and relations of life, they will concern us, and be obligatory upon us.

I. Then; let us take a view of the characters of true religion, and of the man of genuine piety. And, first, it must teach and require *purity*; and the person that professes it, must be *pure in heart*. The meaning of which phrase, will best be understood from the opposites to it in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses; where the apostle is speaking of a *wisdom*, or pretended religious principle, that "is earthly, sensual, devilish"; that works men up to "bitter envying, and strife in their hearts"---a strife to get uppermost, to get a religious reputation one above another, only to carry on some *worldly* design, to favour

some darling notion, passion, or interest. Contrary to all which, says the apostle, the true and celestial piety is *pure*: it admits of no secular intrigues, no corrupt human policy, for its spring and principle. A christian *indeed*, must never be of that sect or party, which under the specious amusement of sanctity and devotion, nurses any secret lust, or would gain a dispensation for any favourite vice. There can be no solid piety, where ambition and the love of power, or where the gratification of any sensual pleasure, lies at the bottom, and is suffered to take sanctuary. No! zeal is but madness, where the morals are permitted to be debauched: and the divine name is but the more affronted, where divine virtues are not the great and first matters regarded. For the single purpose of religion is to make men good, inwardly and unfeignedly good: and all orthodoxy in speculation, and superficial belief, is a lifeless, and a most ridiculous thing, wherever the heart is not made better, nor the practice regulated by what you believe.

And thus the true religion must be first *pure*—without mixture of worldly views, the desire of worldly greatness, or any carnal and immoral

immoral indulgencies, as the motive or foundation of it.

2. When religion is thus pure, it will not fail to be *peaceable*: that is to say, a good christian will always exercise that justice, candour, and equity of temper, in maintaining both his religious and all his other opinions, which may render them consistent with the quiet and peace of all that live about him. He will not suffer his zeal to transport him, beyond the bounds of humanity, or good nature. He will "love the truth"; but he will hold it in such a manner, as to do good with it. He will "contend for the faith"; but he will contend for it with reason, with arguments that may convince men, but with none of that wrath and violence that will offend them, and turn away their hearts from seeing and attending to the beauty of divine truths. He will labour to inform and instruct the mind; but will wish to domineer over the conscience of no man: and while he may differ from many in opinion, he will be friendly and kind and peaceable towards all.

3. Again; sincere and heavenly piety causes men to be *gentle*---to behave to every person

with condescension, affability, and courtesy. A truly wise man, if he be ill treated, will never pursue the low and unchristian method "of rendering evil for evil, and railing for railing." He well remembers, that it is a maxim even of *human* prudence, that "this poor revenge would only discover his own weakness, and give strength to his adversary"; and he knows moreover, that the *divine* wisdom has told us, that "the wrath of man can never work the righteousness of God".

4. Yet farther; this same religious wisdom makes the good man "easy to be injured". The word in the original signifies "easy to be *prevailed upon*"---easy to be dissuaded from any false step, from any error he himself may have incurred, or from any hard measures he may have hastily entered into against another man. And, from the same principle, he is easily wrought into a mild and tender sentiment of his neighbour; seldom will suspect the worst, but is willing to hope the best of other men's intentions, of their actions, or of their state and condition. If he be injured, he is soon and easily brought over to forgiveness: and even though he sees the plain appearance of evil, he will seek out
some

some charitable circumstance or other, to soften, instead of aggravating, the odium and the guilt of it.

5. The man of this heavenly wisdom is "full of mercy, and good fruits". True piety teaches him to behold all others in his *own* glass; to love and treat them as his own image; to see himself in every human being; to give him help when he is in need, and to sympathize with him as the creature of the same gracious and merciful God who is the father of us all.

And as he thus shews compassion to the person, so does he likewise to the opinions, of his brother and fellow creature: he will allow no difference of judgment to abate his humanity, no other distinction to quench his charity.

To this disposition of *mercy*, he will still endeavour to add the practice of *every* kind of good works, or "good fruits". The honest and faithful christian will make a life of uniform virtue the aim, the essence and substance, of all his piety, and the ground of all his hopes and expectations. He will never build those hopes upon the performance of some duties, while he wilfully neglects others.

He

He will not rely upon his zeal for the external modes and forms of worship; not upon his praying much, and fasting often; no not upon the frequency of sacraments themselves; but upon the *fruits* of all these things, the moral and divine graces they were designed to produce in his heart, the love of God shewing itself in love and tenderness to all mankind, in temperance, sobriety, and the good government of himself, of all his passions and pleasures. This is "holding the mystery of faith in a good conscience", according to St. Paul: this is the "pure and undefiled religion" of St. James--"to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world".

6. All this virtue, the apostle tells us, the truly good man will exercise "without partiality, and without hypocrisy".

It is a vast variety that the hand of providence has appointed, in the ranks and fortunes, in the tempers and conceptions, in the interests, nay and in the very religions of mankind, in the present world. But the christian, whose religion, whose wisdom, is *from above*, looks upon them all with an eye of
just

just regard, of universal benevolence, and compassion. Be their countries never so widely distant, he knows them all to be originally of one blood, the same blood with his own. Be their interests never so opposite, he will do injustice to none, nor take a base advantage of any. If he sees some in the deepest ignorance, they become the objects of his pity, but not of his contempt. He would be glad to instruct the heathen, and to bear with the obstinacy of the Jew: and if he saw even a Samaritan in affliction and distress, he would give wine to cheer his drooping heart, and would pour oil into his wounds.

Finally; this is all done by such a man, "without hypocrisy"; with that generosity and frankness of soul, which desires to be known, and seen, and imitated, in what is good; but scorns to shew outwardly, any thing that is not first within; and sincerely labours to be whatever it *professes* to be; and to act, as under the inspection of that all-seeing power, to whose eye all things are naked and open.

In how few words, in how short a compass of a single verse, has this apostle given us the most lovely character that can ever be described!

ed! And yet it is such a character, as the generality of us affect, in some tolerable measure at least, to be thought worthy of. And there is not one man in a hundred, but takes it upon him; though so few of the pretenders to it, are found to come any thing near to the pattern that is set before them. But were it once to become *as* general a fashion, openly to *disown*, to *despise*, and trample upon it; what a world would this be to live in! In what capacity, in what relation, could any of us be either easy to himself, or serviceable to other men?

Let us see then and consider, II. how indispensably necessary these virtues are, both in the civil, and the religious life; 1, as we are men and neighbours; 2d, as we are christians, and christians of different sects and sentiments; 3, as gentlemen, or christians of more refined life and manners.

1, Men, when considered as intelligent beings; placed in society; great in numbers; various and opposite in their inclinations, interfering in their pursuits, and strong in their passions; such a creature I say, thus situated, without some mutual exercise of benignity, forbearance, and good nature, would prove the
most

most outrageous and mischievous animal of all others that inhabit this earth. With his reason and understanding, he would far excell the strength of the lion, in ravages upon his fellow creatures. And what would be the tiger, or the dragon, compared with *his* art and sagacity in doing mischief! Were there no such affection in human nature as the love of man, or the fear of God; where could you choose, or whither would you wish to run, and spend your poor remains of life? Kingdoms would be nothing else, than so many extensive scenes of violence and oppression; every town be but a stage for some petty tyrant to act his horrid part upon; and your very houses become only smaller collections of enemies and deceivers.

In one word the *face* of piety must be kept up in the world; nay, there must be supposed some *real* regard to it, some *real* conscience, some tenderness and charity, remaining; or you would all be glad, with the old prophet, to “fly to the wilderness for a lodging place, “to leave your people, and to go far from “them”: for they would *then* be indeed “an “assembly of treacherous men”.

2. But,

2. But, in the next place, even piety itself, if it be only of the formal and fashionable sort; if it be not the pure, and peaceable religion; will but little avail towards human happiness, much less towards the cause of christianity. The frame of human minds is such; the advantages of knowledge and understanding so different in their degrees; our educations, customs, prejudices, are of such multiform, and often contrary circumstances; that, even in the christian world, it is as impossible to suppose men should exactly agree in all their sentiments, as that they should be exactly alike in their shapes, or faces, or voices. Well and happy is it therefore, that Christ, our wise and great master, has provided the best and only remedy against the evils that may arise, against the "offences that *will* come" from hence, in the present state of things. "This is my commandment, that ye *love* one another." "Be ye all of one mind", says the apostle Peter. "All of one mind": how? All of one and the same *opinion*, in every point? No! but, as the next words explain it, "*love as brethren*", "be *pitiful*, be *courteous*". "Let nothing be done through *strife*, or *vain glory*".

Try

Try and examine if, in all history and experience, the opposite temper to that here enjoined, namely, "the love of things *temporal*, and a *strife* about them", has not been the grand ruin of the church's peace. What was it, that destroyed the first eastern churches, but the want of that purity so essential to "the wisdom that is from above"? What was the great apostacy itself founded upon, but the lust of power and pre-eminence? Or how was the christian world led quite out of the road to heaven, but by a degenerate fondness for the things that are upon earth? And do we not all know (to the joy of all men of worldly minds and worldly policy, but to the long grief and vexation of wise and virtuous ones) that as soon as protestant reformers began to be tainted with the love of that rule and dominion, which they had bravely wrested out of the tyrant hands of the roman bishops, *then* the reformation came to a full stop; it's credit decayed; and protestants, when their principles ceased to be pure, were themselves no longer "peaceable", no longer "gentle, and easy to be entreated", nor "full of mercy and good fruits", nor, "without partiality, and without hypocrisy".

3. The

3. The last capacity wherein I am to view a man of a christian spirit, is that of the *gentleman*. And here I will venture to affirm, that the duties and graces recommended in the text, are absolutely needful to be attained and practised, for the due discharge of this high character. For these virtues are the natural and only ingredients, that can compose a true idea of greatness; and are what alone can keep a man from placing his merit, in what it does not at all consist in. They alone can shew him the real ground of that deference and respect he may desire to have paid him. The man that has a just sense of his Maker, will know how to render his power over his fellow creatures useful and amiable: and no man but *he*, whose principles of mind are pure, and raised above low and sordid views of interest, will ever be able to form the admirable mixture of nobility with decency, and of honour with duty; or will ever taste the difference between what is virtuous praise, and vain pride. Whereas a person of truly polished manners, wise in resolution, generous in temper, and undaunted in good purposes, is equally distant from both extremes of haughtiness and servility. And
when

when manly judgment, and a tender conscience; when a desire to do good to mankind “without partiality, and without hypocrisy”; have framed and fixed his scheme of life;--- this is *indeed* the gentleman, the pure and refined christian, who, on all just and laudable occasions, will equally scorn to trample upon a worm, or basely to cringe to the greatest of mortal men.

To God only wise.---

S E R M O N

when many judgment, and a tender conscience; when a desire to do good to mankind without partiality, and without hypocrisy; have framed and fixed his scheme of life;—this is indeed the gentleman, the pure and honest christian, who on all just and laudable occasions, will equally scorn to trample upon a worm, or basely to change to the greatest of mortal men.

To God only wife.

The first of these is the gentleman, the pure and honest christian, who on all just and laudable occasions, will equally scorn to trample upon a worm, or basely to change to the greatest of mortal men.

S E R M O N XXIII.

SERMON XXIV.

REVELATION xxii. 12.

And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me; to give every man according as his work shall be.

THAT there will hereafter be an universal judgment, or an account taken of the moral conduct of all men; is a truth of the highest certainty to every one that will attentively consider either the nature of man, the state of the present world, or the attributes of God the supreme and all-wise governor of it.

Our clear apprehensions of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood; our experience of the good or evil we are capable of doing, and are perpetually doing in life; the freedom of all

our actions; the harmony and happiness arising from some of them, the discord and misery consequent upon others---do all demonstrate us to be *accountable* for those actions.

The very idea we have of a supreme mind, directing all things to their just ends, shews it impossible to suppose, that God will leave the world in it's *present* confusion;---that he can look with unconcern upon the innocence and sufferings of the virtuous, or the guilt and violence of the disturbers of all the happy purposes of his creation and government.

The scripture account of this last judgment is a confirmation of all these sentiments, of these plain dictates of men's own reason and conscience. The descriptions there given of it, are all agreeable to the nature of the thing; and their solemnity suited to the dignity of the subject;---that "God hath appointed a day" (a time) "in which he will judge the world in righteousness"---that "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all"---that "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with the voice of the archangel"--that "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them" "that

“ that know not God”---that “ the son of
“ man shall come in his glory, and all the
“ holy angels with him; and before him
“ shall be gathered all nations.

And as this great transaction will be the full and final display of the divine wisdom, justice and goodness to mankind, and is consequently the object of our most solicitous concern; the holy scripture therefore concludes the whole account of the revelation of God’s will, and of the dispensations of his providence towards his Church, with this interesting and awful truth-----“ Behold, I come
“ quickly” (says Christ) “ and my reward
“ is with me, to give every man according as
“ his work shall be”.

In these words are contained three distinct points, the consideration of which will lead us to many reflections, that will be of great use towards rectifying the errors of some, and strengthening the faith and virtue of all.

I. The *person*, that is to come to judge us.

II. The *speediness of the time*, in which he will do it; “ I come quickly”.

III. The great and good *purpose* of his errand; ‘ to reward every man according to his
“ work’.

The first and last of these, are as easy to be understood, as they are important: but the second will require a little explanation.

I. Then; there is, in the *person* that will come to judge mankind, all the fitness and propriety that is possible, for such an office. "Behold, I come": the very son of God himself will come--*be*, whom the Almighty Father sent before into the world; sanctified with all graces, and fulness of the spirit; qualified with all merit and favour to intercede for us, and save us from our sins: endued with all authority and power to govern us, with all knowledge and goodness to prescribe us laws for the conduct of our lives---*That* son of God, who has redeemed us by his death, instructed us by his own bright example, watched over us and guided us by his own blessed spirit.

And who else but this Lord, that knows what is *in* man, and has done and suffered so much *for* man, *should* come at last to be his judge and rewarder? God has appointed us *his* proper subjects; He himself has "bought us with a price", and purchased us for his own! What a judgment therefore of truth and righteousness; what a sentence of equity, mercy, and compassion; may we not as-
sure

sure ourselves will be passed by such a governor, so happily related to us! But of this we shall have more to say, in another place.

II. The thing that will require our more immediate attention, is the *speediness of the time* of his appearance to judgment: "behold, I come *quickly*".

The scriptures of the Old Testament, that speak with such frequency and solemnity of the "great and terrible day of the *Lord*"; and those of the New Testament, that more explicitly declare the "second coming of *Christ*";---are wont to express themselves in words that seem to us to imply, that there would be but a *short space of time*, before the event foretold should come to pass. And, in the apostles days, there were some christians, who by wrongly applying some of our Saviour's expressions concerning the destruction of *Jerusalem* to the judgment of the *last day*, concluded it would fall within the compass of their own age. And St. Paul was obliged to correct the mistakes of some of the *Thessalonians*, about this same matter. But St. *Peter* tells us of a company of profane scoffers, who *made a jest* of this second coming of *Christ*, as if the time were already *elapsed*;---

as if, from the delay of it, all thought and expectation of it were at an end. "Where
"is the promise of his coming"? said they.
"For since the fathers fell asleep, all things
continue as they were from the beginning":
the meaning is, 'here are promises and threat-
'nings of a final and *speedy* judgment of
'Christ; but the world goes on, just as it al-
'ways did; and there is no prospect of any
'alteration'. And how many lewd and
thoughtless creatures there may be in our
own days, and may have been in every age,
who please and deceive themselves with the
same ludicrous and impious argument, God
only knows. My present purpose is, to shew
you, that the scripture representations of this
grand revolution, afford no handle, no pre-
tence, for any such objection.

For those phrases, which we render by *speedily* and *suddenly*, have such a variety of accep-
tations in these writings, that to confine them
to the literal sense of a *few years*, or the nar-
row limits of a *man's life*, is a mere refuge of
idleness and ignorance. Sometimes the words
imply no more, than the *certainly* of the
things spoken of; or else the *unexpected time*,
or the awful and astonishing *manner*, of it's
accom-

accomplishment. Thus the prophet Malachi describes the *first* coming of the Messiah--
 "the Lord whom ye seek, shall *suddenly* come
 "to his temple": not *immediately*; for Christ
 did not come till several hundred years after--
 but 'he shall come as *surely*, as if he were
 "now here"---or 'he shall come in a manner,
 "and with circumstances, *unthought of*, and
 "surprising". So again, speaking of the judg-
 ment of Christ, he says; "and I will come
 "near to you to judgment; and I will be a
 "swift witness against the forcerers, and against
 the "adulterers, and against the false swearers"
 ---"a *swift* witness"---that is, a *certain* and a
terrible one, who will not fail to convict and
 condemn the guilty. And in the eleventh
 chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses threatens the
 Israelites, that, if they disobeyed the laws of
 their religion, "they should *quickly* perish
 "from off the good land which the Lord had
 "given them," in the same sense with the
 preceding passages. And our blessed Lord, in
 the same stile of language, promises deliver-
 ance to the persecuted christians in the eigh-
 teenth chapter of St. Luke; "and shall not
 "God avenge his own elect, which cry day
 "and night unto him, though he *bear long*
 "with

“ with them ? I tell you, that he will avenge
“ them *speedily* ” ; that is, he will assuredly do
it, and by steps unforeseen, and alarming to
their enemies. And of that servant (that
christian) who insults and beats and abuses
his fellow servants, he says, more *plainly* and
directly, “ the Lord of that servant shall come
“ in a day when he *looketh not for him*, and in
“ an hour that he *is not aware of* ; and shall
“ cut him asunder ”.

But further ; expressions of this kind may
be perfectly well understood, in the way of
comparison. Spaces and periods of *time* are
spoken of, and described, like the degrees of
motion. They are called great or small, slow
or swift, long or short, as they have relation
to, or are compared with, others. Thus the
motion of an horse, considered with that of a
snail, is exceeding *speedy* ; but in respect to
that of an arrow from a bow, or a shot from
a cannon, it is nothing. The flight of the
eagle, and the current of the wind, are *swift*
indeed ; but, when we think of the motion
of the heavenly bodies, or of that of light
from the sun, they seem not to move at all.
In the same view are we to look upon the
different portions of *time*, wherein the several
dispensations

dispensations of providence are brought to pass. The age of a man beyond fourscore, is of a great length: yet, compared with that of an ancient Patriarch, or especially with that of an angel, behold it is but a span long! Our world, when we consider the fleeting life of a particular man, seems to have lasted a long while; but when you cast your eye back upon the eternity that is past, or look forward to the endless and infinite duration that is to come; it appears to be as a moment! And thus the great day of our judgment, be it never so many thousand years off, viewed with relation to the unnumbered periods and providences that shall have passed before it, and the everlasting ages that are to follow it, may be said to be *near at hand*.

This may be sufficient to shew you the nature and consistency of the prophetic language. "The end is not yet"; but still it is true, that "the judge standeth at the door"; that "he who *shall* come, *will* come, and will not tarry"---"will be sure not to stay beyond his *appointed time*"; in which same meaning our blessed Master tells us *here*, "Behold I come *quickly*".

III. Let

III. Let us now bestow a few thoughts upon the glorious *purpose* and *design* of this second appearance of our Lord--“to give every man according as his work shall be”.

Whoever looks abroad into this present life of ours, into all the various and opposite works of men that are done under the sun; will often observe a sad and strange mixture of things. Our histories lay open a continued scene of wickedness, and brave virtues---of oppression and patience, of wisdom and folly, happiness and misery---all acted upon the same stage, by rational and free agents. And our own times, and the times to come, will still display the same medley, of prosperous iniquity, and injured goodness, among the sons of men.

To rectify these abuses, and close the whole dispensation in wisdom and beauty, in truth and righteousness, is the work of a just providence, and of an all wise governor. And as a world of intelligent creatures cannot, *must* not, for ever go on in this state of disorder; so religion assures us there is a “judge of all the earth”, at whose dread assize every wrong shall be redressed, and every work rewarded: For such the scriptures represent
our

our judge, and the judgment he will pass, to the terror of every corrupt heart, and the inexpressible comfort of every virtuous one. A judgment wherein every condition and circumstance, every opportunity and advantage, every prejudice and infirmity, every passion and temptation of men, will be wisely considered, and mercifully allowed for; and every article will be put into the scale, that can demonstrate the justice and equity of the sentence, and stop every mouth from all possibility of complaint. And when this be done, malicious wickedness shall find no shelter, and every degree of generous virtue will meet with its ample recompence. Riches, power, and grandeur will be of no avail; for here will be no place for bribes, no room for corruption. Neither wit nor learning, the flowers of rhetoric nor the charms of eloquence, will make any impression upon a judge, who has no weaknesses to be touched, no blind compassions to be artfully raised. Our works alone will be the subject of examination: and, whether they were done in secret, they will be brought to light; or wrought in hypocrisy, they will be stript of all disguise; and, if done in truth and uprightness, they shall be rewarded

rewarded openly. Men of all times and circumstances, will see and confess the justice and mercy shewn them. "As many as have sinned without" (any revealed) "law, shall perish without law; and as many as have sinned under such a law, shall be judged by that law" "One shall be beaten with many stripes, another with few". "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly". "One shall be made ruler over ten cities, another over five". "One shall receive a prophet's reward, another shall receive a righteous man's reward"; and even the most inferior in real goodness, shall in no wise lose *his* reward. In one word; nothing shall be treated with severity, but ungrateful wickedness; and not the meanest of God's faithful servants be forgotten. And while some shall call upon "the rocks and mountains to fall on them"; the very least of all those that shall inherit God's kingdom, will stand for ever amazed at the divine bounty, so far surpassing all that he could merit, or ask, or think!

The observations that might be drawn, by way of *application* of what has been said, either for reforming the errors of bad men, or comforting

forting the hearts of honest and upright ones, are very numerous : but I have time to mention only a few of the principal.

I. You see the low folly of those immoral persons, who delude themselves with a notion, that ' if there *be* a day of future judgment, yet is a *great way off*, and at a *vast distance* from them'.

As the scripture accounts of this important event, leave no room for the raillery of profane men, with respect to the *time when* it will happen ; so the *distance*, at which it may be from us, can administer no satisfaction, no real consolation, to any wicked person, upon whatever supposition he proceeds, whatever scheme he may invent. For be there never so many ages to come, before sentence will be pronounced upon you ; the thing that is to determine *what that sentence will be*, is not in any sense far off :--the time of your *death* will decide your fate, either for happiness or misery. Surely you can see to the end of the *few years* (perhaps the *few months*) you have to live : and when *they* be expired, you have quite done with one world, and your doom is fixed for another.

Then

Then again; as to the time that is to pass between death and the judgment, and our manner of existing in all that space; imagine it to be as you please---the wicked will find no gain, nor the virtuous any loss, by it. If death be only a long deep sleep, a suspension of all power of acting and thinking; your resurrection will give you no apprehension of the length of time you have lain dormant. And if Adam or Abraham were now to wake from the dead, they could not possibly tell, upon this supposal, whether they had slept one single night, or four thousand years. Where there are no ideas in the mind, successively following one another; there can be no measuring of time.

But further; if you conceive this long interval to be a state of *expectation* of the grand day of reckoning; this still will be no tedious, no irksome delay, in the eyes of good men. They are happy in the blessed expectation itself. They delight and rejoice in seeing God's dispensations, and righteous providence, continually going forward, and drawing on to a glorious maturity: and the divine wisdom and forbearance in *deferring* the judgment, causes

causes them to wait for their crown with a joy that cannot be uttered. And as to sinners, whose consciences have already condemned them; *they* surely will be in no haste for their judge. Delay, to *them*, is the only hope they have; and a sad, and a gloomy hope it must needs be. The only little comfort they are capable of (and hard they would think it, to be deprived of that little) is, that they shall not be "tormented *before the time*".

In fine; God's own time, in this as in all his other proceedings, is ever best, and most merciful: and those creatures that build wicked hopes upon the divine long suffering, are only still more foolish "sinners against their own souls".

2. Let us hence infer this most pleasing and momentous truth; that 'the rewards and punishments of another life are not matters of arbitrary disposal, but will be distributed by our judge according to a fixed unalterable rule, of the truth of things, and the merits of persons'. The great God does not act herein by mere will, and uncontrollable prerogative; but by a law of consummate reason, and the immutable nature of wise government. "As his *work hath been,*
so

so shall it be given to every one". When a sinful man is condemned, and a more sinful one receives greater condemnation; the cause, that creates the difference, is in *themselves*. And when the fatal separation shall be made, between the souls of the righteous and the wicked; it is the contrary state and condition of those souls, that necessarily *calls* for it". "There is a great gulf between them", says the scripture parable. Their own *works* and *tempers* and *habits* render it *impossible* for them to dwell together. Light may as soon dwell with darkness, and peace consist with confusion, and justice and violence shake hands together, as that there can be any thing but an hell where there is wickedness, and an heaven of pleasure where goodness and purity have fixed their seats.

I must close up all, by including many other considerations under one article.

3. Therefore; 'let no vicious person imagine, he can ever escape the punishment of his crimes; nor let any good man be impatient for his reward'. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness". Be assured things will "be hereafter, according to the foundation
" you

you lay for them in your present life of trial. This foundation is *within yourselves*: and that your case *will*, and *must*, depend upon your works, is the voice of nature, of providence, and of scripture. What an argument is here against every vice, what spirit and persuasion does it yield to every virtue! Remember that open wickedness will be followed by public shame; and that the most refined arts of villainy will *then* prove of no service; for God will disclose the very hidden things of darkness.

Be patient under injuries, and seek no revenge: there is one coming, who will seek out, and judge, every thing.

Sink under no adversity, but take comfort in the deepest affliction; and look up to *Him*, who brings his reward with him.

Suffer not your virtues to be at a stand; but, in all instances of duty to God, of kindness and charity to your brethren, and contentment and sobriety in yourselves, “press forward to the mark”, and improve daily. For there will always be a proportional recompence, to answer the vigour of your endeavours; and every step in goodness, is a step to glory.

To God only wise.---

SERMON XXV.

LUKE, ix, 25.

*a most excellent
sermon*

For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?

IN the verses preceding the text, our blessed Saviour had been acquainting his disciples with the severe and cruel treatment, which he himself, the son of God, the Saviour of men, should meet with in the world; ---that he was to be rejected, despised, and slain;---and that whoever would be his follower, and engage in the divine work of propagating his religion in a corrupt and sinful age, must generally expect the same usage, and take the office upon the like conditions.

“ If any man will come after me, let him
“ take up his cross, and follow me. For
“ whosoever will save his life, shall lose it:

B b 2

“ but

“ but whosoever will lose his life for my sake,
“ the same shall save it”.

These terms of hard suffering and persecution, for conscience and true religion, had a peculiar respect to the apostles, and first disciples. They are not universal, not bound and entailed upon all succeeding christians. When they happen in any other ages, they are accidental; occasioned by the vices of the times, and the wickedness of nations. But whenever they happen, they must be submitted to; and a special and glorious reward is held out, and a penalty of losing life and final happiness denounced, to influence our conduct in this important matter.

To raise and encourage the hearts of men to accept even of death itself, rather than part with truth, and a good conscience; our Lord here makes use of a way of arguing, the strongest and most convincing that can be. It is that way, wherein you yield and grant to an adversary, by way of supposition, much more than can in reality, and in the nature of the thing, be true; and yet even with these allowances, you shew him how false his conclusions are, and how short he comes of the purposes he aimed at:---then you turn
upon

upon him, and take from him all those extravagant concessions; and, upon a supposal of what is only justly and fairly allowable, demonstrate to him more abundantly the error of his judgment, or the folly of his proceedings.

This is our Saviour's manner of reasoning, in the text. He supposes it possible, that by violating his conscience, and a cowardly compliance with the iniquity of the times, a man might not only save his present life, but might also gain (what no man ever did, or ever will again) "the whole world", the empire and command of the whole world, all the pleasures and all the possessions of it. And yet, even *then*, the loss of himself; the loss of all virtuous principles, and manly qualities; the loss of the divine favour; the loss of a future and eternal happiness; --- would shew *this* to be a mad exchange, and a dreadful bargain.

Now as our Saviour's argument is clear and forcible, even in the case of suffering for the cause of God, and his true religion; so it will appear still more forcible, to demonstrate the folly of those common vices, those far less gainful instances of wickedness, for the gratification of which men are generally so thoughtless, as to "lose themselves, and be "cast away".

In this view therefore I intend to consider it; with respect to the first case, more shortly; but with respect to the second, in a fuller and more particular manner.

When God gives being to any creature, and bestows on it powers and faculties proper to it's nature, and sufficient for it's happiness; he has an infinitely just right to *limit* his gifts to what space of *time* he pleases. Eternity of existence can be the claim of no creature whatever.

Again; when he made man a rational and social being; he had certain views and purposes of his own honour to be answered, in the short life he allotted him here upon earth. The cultivation of religion and virtue - - - an obedience to the laws of truth and righteousness - - - are the great and wise end of the life of such a creature. All our duty, and our real pleasure, center in the promotion of this end. When we act against it, we become criminal; and while we act for it, we do no more than it is our duty to do. When it so happens, that we suffer for the sake of it; our cause is glorious, and our sufferings exalt our merit, and work for us a durable happiness,
Nay,

Nay, when life itself is called for, to be spent sooner than ordinary in such a cause; it is only that life, which was freely given, (or rather lent to us,) for a time;--given us with this very design, to be employed in the service of the great donor. And consequently the refusing to surrender it into such a hand, and in such a service, must be the highest ingratitude, as well as the basest cowardice and folly. This may serve to shew you the reasonableness of those terms of the gospel, wherein are demanded of every christian, patience in tribulation, perseverance under sufferings, and constancy even to death, in defence of truth, and the interest of God's spiritual kingdom. And when we remember that this is indeed the noblest trial of the duty and fidelity of such a creature; and what a reward of bliss and immortality is promised to the discharge of it; it will satisfy us that a martyr for real conscience, is far from the imputation of folly and enthusiasm;---that on the contrary, he acts a part of the wisest foresight, and of the bravest resolution. While *they* must appear to have made a wretched bargain, who by prevaricating with God the searcher of all hearts, and by a low and mean compli-

ance

ance with the most worthless part of mankind, to save a few poor and paltry advantages, let go their main and essential good; and for the sake of lengthening out a few years of painful life, give up a whole, and a blessed, eternity! For such is the case of these men, and no other. And were they to barter their principles and their conscience, for no less than the whole world; they could not possibly taste a ten thousandth part of what it produces. Or were they supposed to enjoy all its wealth, and elegancies, and pomps, and follies, at once; yet *how long a time* would they have to enjoy them in? If they could draw in all the delights that are to be found from the east to the west, and command the reverence and homage of all that “dwell “from the flood to the world’s end”; it would afford them neither more health, nor longer life, than fall to the share of other mortals. In all probability, they would soon make one pleasure to drive away another; and, by an over-hasty enjoyment, only post it on the faster to that fatal hour, wherein their “soul is to be required of them”.

II. And if the argument be thus good with respect to those who may be sufferers, or even martyrs

martyrs, for true religion; I am now to remark, how much more strongly it will convince us of the madness of such men, who, for the mere indulgence of a few personal passions and vices, "lose themselves, and are cast away".

The apostle St. John, in his first epistle, has, under three heads, summed up all that this world (the sensual world) has to bestow, wherewith to gratify the desires of a vicious man. And no philosopher upon earth could have stated it with greater exactness--"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life". These will take in the case of every irreligious person, and lay open the foolish inconsideracy of the exchange he makes.

1. The lusts of the flesh, are those darling vices, for which are forfeited the soul, and all it's manly qualities, by your lovers of excess, luxury, and debauchery. And what do these creatures gain, in neat profit, even of *present* enjoyment, beyond a person of temperance and sobriety? All pleasures that are natural, and truly such; that conduce to the health of the body, or the relaxation and refreshment of the mind; that employ the poor, and promote

mote industry, arts, and commerce ;--all these are of God's own gift, and gracious appointment. And they that place religion in an over nice abstemiousness from these genuine pleasures, know as little of piety, as they do of human nature, and of the world. But to riot and debauch in objects of sense, is to ruin the very faculties, the very appetites, you mean to gratify by the use of them. And, besides that they who live fast, must, generally and of course, live the less time ; what intervals, what mixtures, of pain and vexation, do they throw into their own enjoyments ? A stomach and head disordered for many days, for the foolish freaks of a single night---the whole nervous frame ineebled and shattered for a whole life, by the immoderate indulgence of a few months, or of a year or two at most, in the prime of youth !

It is the law, the wise condition, of sensual delights, that the more imprudently you use them, the less, upon the whole, you must have of them,. And had you the whole globe of earth to feed your luxury, this only would be the fruit of it---that you might raise abundance of appetites, but would soon want all power and strength to satisfy any of them !

Then

Then again ; take your men of the merely vain, the idle, or the sporting life. Give these gentlemen half the world, or give them the whole of it : what do they do with it : what a figure do they make in it ? What a round of poor entertainments does such a life consist of ! To lie down, and to rise again ; to dress, and to undress ; to eat, and be hungry ; to drink, and be thirsty again ; to play, and drudge in sport, and be tired ; to run through the day in trifles, and at night to sink down in the same sleep that levels them with the brutes ! --And so at length, when repetition has cloyed the fancy, and palled the relish of these vanities, or else perhaps in the very midst of them all, they are forced to resign their breath and all their hopes together, in great vexation of spirit !

And now I appeal to your own most cool and serious thoughts, whether there be any thing in all these instances, that can weigh against the pure and sincere pleasures of a sober, industrious, a studious, and a temperate life ? Or is it in your power to imagine they will compensate for one single day of those rational, those exalted joys, for which God designed us, and with which he has promised

mised to bless us (if we do not lose *ourselves*, and forfeit *them*) in a future and eternal state?

2. The next thing the world can offer, wherewith to captivate a sensual man, is "the lust of the eye"---of a covetous, or, as the scripture calls it, an "evil eye";--an insatiable desire of riches, to be obtained by any means honest or dishonest, for no good end, or valuable purpose;---a thirst after an abundance, not to be well and wisely employed, but only to be thought upon, and looked upon, or (which is still far worse) to be spent in vain and evil uses; which last is not the enjoyment of the man, but of a corrupt and vicious fancy; the former cannot have so much as the *name* of enjoyment: for no man can be said really to possess, any more than he can use: the desire of more for it's own mere sake, is that dropsy of the mind, that "foolish and hurtful lust", that "root of all evil", which, while it deprives other men of good, gives the man himself no satisfaction, but "pierces him through with many sorrows";--with the sorrow and anxiety to get; with the fear to lose; with the bitter sense of being hated and despised by all reasonable men, for the very thing he vainly hopes to be esteemed
and

and respected for ; and finally, with the daily and nightly dread of parting with it---with the alarm of every sickness, and the terror of every symptom of approaching death !

Compare, now, the life of such a person, with the christian of a moderate fortune, and a liberal cheerful spirit ; nay, with the honest labourer for daily bread, who contentedly spends the day in the work allotted him by providence, and at night goes to a rest that has nothing to disturb it---for his desires are temperate, and his sleep is sweet.

When you have made this comparison, see what notable advantage you can discover in such riches as I am speaking of, if they are to be purchased by the loss of the virtues of the mind, the truest blessings of life, and the only hopes of death ! See if they do not verify the words of the prophet ; “ as when a partridge sitteth upon her eggs, but hatcheth them not ; so he that getteth riches, but not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool !

But, 3, the object that bids the highest price, and tempts a man the most strongly to throw himself away for it, is the “ pride of life” ;---the inordinate love of power, of dominion

dominion and command over others, even at the expence of the rights and liberties of those fellow creatures! And what is it that these sons of violence generally gain, by the transgression of all laws human and divine? Some of them have been stiled 'conquerors of the world'; though none of them ever yet saw one quarter of it, or could have the least possible occasion for one hundredth part of what he *did* see! In the course of nature, or in the course of providence, have these men been distinguished, by either an happier or a longer life than the rest of their species? Did they wade to thrones through blood and slaughter, without fears and dangers, without remorse and terrors of mind? Or has the *present* wrath of heaven slept, and permitted them to dwell in uninterrupted felicity, and to die in peace? Inform yourselves how this has been, from fact, history, and experience.

In the book of Daniel you have a dreadful description of what befel the two grand monarchs of the Assyrian empire. In the fourth chapter, you find Nebuchadnezzar walking upon the top of his palace, and throwing out these words of vain glory: "is not this the
" great Babylon, that I have built for the
" house"

“house” (the capital) “of the kingdom, by
“the might of my power, and for the honour
“of my majesty”? The words were scarce
gone out of his mouth, but all this power,
and all this majesty, vanished along with
them. “he was driven from men, and did
“eat grass as oxen; his dwelling was with
“beasts; his body was wet with the dew of
“heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle’s
“feathers, and his nails like birds claws; till
“seven times”, that is, seven years, “had
“passed over him”. Not that he was literal-
ly and really turned into a beast, as some may
injudiciously imagine; but, by the distemper
of a frenzy or madness, he ran wild, became
unmanageable, unsociable, and beastly, as
plainly appears from the thirty fourth verse,
where his recovery is described, not by a
change again from a beast to a man, but from
a mad man to a man in his senses--- “mine
“*understanding* returned unto me”. Upon
which change, he did that which all vici-
ous men will do, when they come to a right
understanding; “he blessed the most high,
“and praised the King of heaven, all whose
“works are truth; who ruleth over the king-
doms of the world; whose “ways are judg-
ment;

"ment; and those that walk in pride, he is
"able to abase".

The next chapter shews you the son and successor of this man of power, feasting and profanely revelling upon the spoils his father had committed.---An handwriting upon the wall declared his hasty ruin!---The Medes and Persians were mining his capital, at the very hour of his debaucheries! And all other histories agree with what we are told in the thirtieth and thirty first verses: "in that
"night was Belshazzar slain, and Darius the
"Median took the kingdom".

Alexander, when he had subdued, and pil-
laged, the eastern world, made drunkenness
(the vice of a porter) his top pleasure; and
in a drunken fit he died, say some accounts;
or was poisoned, according to others, in the
flower of his age.

And no sooner had Julius Cæsar raised him-
self to the fourth and last great monarchy,
upon the liberties of his brave countrymen;
but he was slain in the senate by the hands of
his own friends and relations.

Here you have some capital instances of the
present advantages those men have reaped,
who, "gaining the world, have lost them-
"selves".

The

The application of all this, especially to *Christians* who are so imprudent as to hazard the loss of themselves in a future and eternal world, for the transient pleasures and possessions of *this* life, is clear, and most pressing.

1. Let it be no wonder, nor any objection against the divine wisdom, that God should make, and leave, us capable of “losing ourselves”. Without such a capacity, there could be no free agency, no moral obedience: and without *that*, God might indeed be the creator, and arbitrary lord, but he could not be the righteous governor, the judge and rewarder, of his creatures. This therefore is the goodness of God towards us--- ‘not to
 ‘ put us out of all possibility of being lost,
 ‘ but never to cast us away till we have deliberately and wilfully *lost ourselves*’.

But, 2, turn your thoughts to the consideration, of not only the folly, but the presumption and ingratitude, of *losing a soul*. What was it, think you, for which God endued your minds with such noble faculties of understanding, reason, and freedom? That you should corrupt and debase those perfections, by a few sordid gratifications, and low passions? When he sent his beloved son to instruct, to

enlighten, and by his own blood to redeem, the souls of men; do *you* set no value upon what the great and wise *Creator* hath put so high a price? How coldly soever these things may sit upon the hearts of men, in a loose and idle age; as *truths* indeed, but truths so stale, and universally known, as to be therefore but little regarded; yet the time is hastening on, when *this* will be our perpetual, our most intense thought; *this* our everlasting wonder; that for all that is in *one*, or in a *thousand* whole worlds such as *ours*, any creature should be so unwise, as to give up for ever the favour of God, the virtues, peace, and happiness of his own immortal soul.

To the King eternal.---

S E R M O N

SERMON XXVI.

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON xviii. 14.

*The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity ;
but a wounded spirit who can bear ?*

THE word of which we, in so many passages of Scripture, render *infirmities*, is used sometimes in a particular, at other times in a more general acceptation. When our Lord is said, in the eighth chapter of St. Matthew, “to have taken” (that is to have taken *away*) “our infirmities”; both the foregoing words, and the following ones, explain it of *bodily* sickness. And when St. Paul advises Timothy to “drink a little wine for “his Stomach’s sake, and his often *infirmities*”; it means the same thing. And thus the original word in the text, properly de-

notes the weakness and disorders of the bodily frame, as distinguished from the troubles and sufferings of the mind. But when our blessed Saviour, in the fourth chapter of the epistle of the Hebrews, is said to have been "touched with the feeling of our *infirmities*"; the sense is given, in other words, that he was "in all points *tempted* like as *we* are";--he was exposed to the same hardships, afflictions, and temptations, to which our human life is so frequently liable. And thus are we to understand that scripture expression of being "men of *like passions* with *us*". Elias, says St. James, "was a man subject to *like passions* as *we* are". And the apostles Paul and Barnabas told the men of Lystra, in the fourteenth chapter of the Acts, "we are men of *like passions* with *you*"---not *passionate* men as *you* are, but men subject to the same *accidents* and *sufferings*; *mortal* men like yourselves. So again: when St. Paul declares in his second epistle to the Corinthians, that he "took pleasure, and gloried, in his *infirmities*"; he shews his meaning, by adding, "in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses *for Christ's sake*" And this is the more frequent use of the phrase in scripture---to express

express the *general*, the various, and innumerable trials, wants, and afflictions, where-with the divine providence proves and exercises the piety and patience of mankind in this present state. And, indeed, how great and numberless are the articles of this kind ! In pains and distempers of the *body*, it is the lot of some unfortunate persons, not only to take their common share with the rest of their fellow creatures ; but they are *born* to them ; they bring a load of them into the world, in the very temper of their blood, and the frame of an ill constitution. So they are launched into a sea of misery, either from the *natural infirmities*, or (which is not seldom the case) from the *vices and debaucheries*, of their parents. And those who are so happy as to escape this sad *inheritance* of evil, come generally into a proportion of calamity, that will sufficiently try the spirit and virtue of a man. In our most perfect state of health and activity, we all carry about us the seeds of disorders so numerous, that even the physician very often wants a name for them, and little knows how to give us any relief under them. These principles, thus lodged in our mortal natures, temperance and prudence itself can-

not absolutely prevent from breaking out sooner or later, in some fatal malady, by which we all groan out life, and give up our last breath.---Besides this, while our bodies may be tolerably at ease, how may the heart itself be disturbed and depressed, by unhappy circumstances, and hard junctures of life? by crosses, and disappointments; by some errors and bad managements of our own, often by the fraud and injustice, by the calumnies or violences, of others! Enemies are seldom wanting, to the most innocent; and a door is always open for some misfortune or other, to the most wary, and the wisest of us all. And where there are no professed enemies, how frequently are there found the false friend; the unkind, the uncharitable neighbour; the cruel parent, or the undutiful child! These, all and every of them, will help to throw bitterness and sorrow into the life of man.

But especially; if, in the last place, you take in the matter of *religious conduct*, and the case of suffering for *conscience sake*; how much harder will be the present condition of good men! In such a case, and in times of great corruption; the more virtuous men are, the worse will be their treatment from that prevailing

vailing majority, to whose lives their virtues are a perpetual reproach ! The greater love they shew of truth ; the keener malice will they feel from such as “ love darkness rather than light, because” their doctrines are depraved, and “ their deeds evil”. Finally, and upon the whole---to be a *Christian* indeed, is but too commonly to have the world for our enemy ; and more or less, in all ages and nations, to experience the truth of the apostle’s words, that “ all who will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution”. Here then is a sad train of *infirmities* in the fuller sense of that word, a dreadful store of evils, waiting upon this present life of man ; of all men in some degree, and often of good men and good christians in the highest and worst degree.

And yet these scriptures assure us, that under every one of them, the *spirit* of man has power to support him ; that God has furnished him with such provisions of strength and assistance, as will enable him to stand under the burden, and to escape at last with a contented mind, and an unblemished conscience. Let us see how the fact is, and what *kind* of provision there is made.

And, 1, there is implanted in almost every breast, some good measure of that *spirit*, which we call *courage*; and by which I mean that “*internal vigour*, which helps to sustain us under evils and adversity”. Nature has an abhorrence from being borne down, and oppressed; something of generous scorn and shame, to yield, and be overcome. Of this alone, what brave examples have we seen, and read of, in the world! What hardships have many valiant spirits undergone, for honour, for their friends, for liberty, for their country! But perhaps this, which *we* look upon as a natural power of the *mind*, may very much depend upon the constitution of the *body*;--upon strong nerves and animal spirits. Well, be it so: yet still, even such a frame of body must be allowed to be a blessing of providence, and a gift of God, to those that have it: and then a merciful allowance is to be made to some honest and good minds, who would endure long, and hold out great, if they had not a weak partner to support them; if there were not a poor corruptible body to press down the soul, and stop the current of her resolution. But this I will add likewise

likewise---that as the state of the body may be supposed to have a great effect upon the mind; so it is well known, on the other side, what a noble influence the good temper and worthy affections of the mind have, to actuate and invigorate the bodily powers. Infomuch that there is not found, in all experience, so safe a guard to natural courage, so lively a spur to innate bravery, nothing that can give a person such unshaken fortitude, as innocency, and a pure conscience. The truly good man has ever the fewest fears: and none can be said to be so little afraid of death, as they that are always prepared to die.

2. On this account therefore, God has farther aided the mind of man with *reason*; with that superior faculty, which enables him to discern the differences and relations of things; the good, and the evil, that is in them; whereby to regulate his choices and desires, and fortify himself in his actions, sufferings, and resolutions, from a consideration of the merits of causes, and of persons. It is this faculty that gives him (when he uses and improves it well) the knowledge of his Creator, a sense of the being, attributes, laws and will, of the all-wise governor of the world.

And

And thus reason, heightened into a principle of religion, will shew men the fitness and wisdom of the evils permitted by providence, as well as of the good they derive from it's bountiful hand; and will teach them patience and resignation in bearing the one, as well as the gratitude due under the enjoyment of the other. This it was, that supported that great man Job under the uncommon weight of *his* infirmities; that led him to this most chearful and comfortable conclusion;----that though "man be indeed born to *some* trouble as naturally as the sparks fly upwards; yet affliction cometh not forth of the dust, nor springeth out of the ground"---that is to say, "present evils are not the effects of necessity and fate, of chance and mere accident (words that fools make use of, without any meaning to them) but are distributed by a wise hand for merciful ends, and for the moral improvement of mankind". It was this divine sentiment, that raised, in the heart of that excellent person, a determination worthy of a religious philosopher, and so highly pleasing to the great God--- "though he slay me, yet will I trust in him". Still however

ever, the mere rational and philosophic world has been able to boast but few such men as Job. Reason has undergone many corruptions, and religion been clouded by infinite instances of vice, ignorance, superstition, and priestcraft.

Wherefore, 3, God has assisted the "spirit of man" to sustain itself under present infirmities, by the additional light of his holy word, and of his *revealed* will. And here the christian hero has a supply of every argument, that can fortify his mind in the worst of circumstances. He sees every representation of his Maker, of himself, and of human life, that can have power to lift up a drooping heart. He beholds the afflicting hand of God as the hand of a father infinitely tender and compassionate; training up his children to virtue and glory, by fidelity and suffering; trying their patience for no purposes of humour and caprice, but to raise their spirits above the earth, and to brighten their crown of victory in heaven. So the prophecies describe the state of the christian world, and elegantly compare it to the trying and purifying of *metals*. "Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried", says the prophet Daniel.

Daniel. "I have chosen thee in the furnace
 "of affliction", says Isaiah. "I will refine
 "them as silver is refined, and will try them
 "as gold is tried", says Zechariah. And the
 author of the book of wisdom, speaking of
 good men in adversity--- "the souls of the
 "righteous are in the hand of God--having
 "been a little chastised, they shall be greatly
 "rewarded: for God proved them, and found
 "them worthy for himself". And St. Peter
 esteemed it, very justly, a consolation adequate
 to the severest temptations, when he told his
 persecuted christians, that "the trial of their
 faith" (of their *faithfulness*, it *should* be) "be-
 "ing much more precious than of gold that
 "perisheth, though it be tried with fire,
 "would be found unto praise, and honour,
 "and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ".

This provision, then has God made, where-
 with the spirit of man may "sustain his
 "infirmity". But the text informs us of one
 particular state of mind, exceedingly hard to
 be borne, if not quite insupportable; and that
 is "a wounded spirit". Now a mind, or spi-
 rit, may properly be understood to be *wound-*
ed, or so highly discomposed as to be render-
 ed miserable, in these two ways and degrees:

1, by

1, by the disorder and violence of it's own passions; or, 2, by a sense of guilt, and the consciousness of it's own crimes.

1. Whenever our passions are suffered to transgress the bounds of reason, and of nature; we are *then* in a condition truly unnatural, and consequently most uneasy, and comfortless. Diseases of the body, and the common difficulties and disasters of life, will admit of present hopes, and future prospects, to alleviate and soften them; but raging passions bring no balsam, to heal or assuage the wounds *they* give. While furious anger, and implacable resentment, fire your breast; the mind is affected with much greater pain by such a commotion, than by the most intense fever. When envy, pride, and ambition swell your heart, a disappointment galls and vexes it, far beyond what a man of moderate desires is capable of feeling from the loss of any thing this world has to bestow.

2. Yet even *these* are small wounds, compared with those that are given by a sense of guilt, and a conscious dread of the vengeance that awaits the crimes we have committed. When we throw up the reins to our "foolish and hurtful lusts", we must indeed be uneasy

easy under what we suffer at *present*; but we look, at that time, very little into *consequences*. Whereas, when reflection comes to take place, how does the misery increase; how do the strokes, that made the first wound, follow on, and double upon one another! The scriptures, with the greatest propriety as well as elegance, compare such a mind to the troubled sea: wave rushes after wave: and as there is nothing to still the storm, none of the remedies that help to mitigate other evils, there can be no calm, no peace. Natural courage will bear no man out against the just reproaches of his own mind. And though headstrong and thoughtless wickedness will certainly, while it lasts, stifle all conscience, and drive away all troublesome reflections; yet this madness is far below the nature of real courage. For true courage is a firmness to act, or to suffer, founded in the sense of a good and manly cause; but resolution, without discretion, always flags and dies, as soon as the fit of passion cools, and is over.

Whenever reason is called upon by a guilty heart, she comes not as an advocate to defend, but as a judge to condemn him: and the same

same clear glass that shews a man his guilt, shews him at the same time his folly and danger and misery.

3. Finally therefore; when the eternal obligations of christianity, and the dreadful prospect of a future state, make *their* entrance into such a breast; how must the anguish still rise, and the pain be aggravated! There the righteous judge of the world, who so freely pardons iniquity, transgressions, and sins, repented of, is set forth, in his own nature, and in his divine word, as the executor of wrath upon all them that do, and persist in doing, what is evil. The man passes sentence upon himself, and feels and owns *that* to be right, which his God decrees against him! “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity”: but when the spirit itself is wounded with guilt, “who can bear it”

The application to be made of the several branches of the subject before us, is briefly this.--- ‘You see here both the true reason why the outward evils of life are looked upon by most men to be so hard to bear, and also what is the sure method to render them supportable’. If you are weighed down by things *without* you, it is only because

cause you have not laid in a proper balance *within* you. Were our passions calm, and our desires kept in moderate bounds; a great deal of pain might be valiantly supported; and most of our losses and disappointments would have but little edge to cut and to hurt us.

Again; if a "wounded spirit" be the worst of evils in the present life; we should do well to consider, how much more intolerable it will be in that which is to come. While vain and profligate men are hot in the pursuit of their vices *here*, they find many things to divert their thoughts from painful subjects, and that help to drown the voice of conscience. But when the curtain of life shall once be drawn, the senses be done with, and all their objects be for ever removed from us; the scene will *then* be totally changed. Fashions and customs, examples, precedents, wit and companions will all lose their influence; your very temptations will desert you; and you will lie naked to yourselves, and to the sight of your own folly and wretchedness!

Wherefore, as the only thing that can prevent the beginnings of sin, is to keep the guard of reason over your inclinations and affections; so, whenever you have indulged
any

any evil passions, and contracted a guilt of action, there is no remedy left to heal the wound of conscience, but to hearken to the warnings it gives you, and the pain it makes you feel; and to work up *these* into a generous and manly repentance:---which repentance, if it be sincere, will always find acceptance; and if it be not delayed, will never be too late. But if you put it off from day to day, in foolish hopes, and vain resolutions of reforming some time or other when your pleasures have all forsaken you, and death draws near *you*; you will be in infinite danger of dying of those wounds you have neglected to cure;---of carrying them with you into that other world, where you will find yourselves to be *indeed* utterly unable to bear them!

To God only wise.---

SERMON XXVII.

LUKE, xiii. 23. 24.

Then said one unto him, Lord are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

WHEN the question here put to our Lord, and the reply he gives to it, with many like expressions in the New Testament, are laid together, and compared with abundance of other passages that seem to look the quite contrary way, and to convey a meaning directly opposite;---they are apt to raise a troublesome curiosity in the minds of some, and to fill the hearts of many more with melancholy apprehensions of what will become of the far greater part of mankind,

even of christians, in another world ; and of the danger they themselves may be in, even while they are industriously labouring to perform their duty.

The gate and passage to heaven and happiness is described in this text, as strait, difficult, and hazardous, by the Lord of heaven himself. In another place he tells us, that " many are called, but few chosen"---to the great reward. St. Peter compares the salvation of christians to that of God's saving Noah and his family in the ark---the number was no more than eight persons. And St. Paul speaks of a small remnant only, that is to be saved ; and likens the number of them to the poor number of seven thousand Israelites, " who had not bowed to the image " of Baal".

But the hardest part of all is, that only few are to be *saved*, while a great many will *strive* for it to no purpose--- " many will seek to " enter in, and shall not be able".

Yet at the same time, these scriptures are still more full of expressions that give the liveliest hope, the most explicit promises, to all men---to all, I mean, that will seek and strive, and do their best endeavours. Our
merciful

merciful Lord has repeatedly declared that his "yoke is easy"---that "his commandments are not grievous", or difficult"--that "none who come to him, shall in any wise be cast out".--He bids us ask, and we shall have; seek, and we shall find: for every one", says he, "that asketh, receiveth". And there are a thousand texts that will satisfy any man, that the practice of religion is represented in the scripture as easy, natural, and pleasant; and that whoever diligently seeks his Maker, will find him to be his gracious and bounteous rewarder.

Well then; how are these things to be brought together? How is the way to heaven strait and narrow; how is it free and open? How are all men invited to it, while yet so few will arrive at it, and enjoy it?

I. Let us, first, consider and explain those texts, which seem to carry the difficulties in them; that so the plainer ones may remain possessed of all their native truth, comfort, and encouragement.

II. When this is done, the doctrines and reflections arising from what has been said, will appear to be of great use and advantage.

I. If the books of God were read with the same prudence, attention, and impartiality, wherewith other ancient writings must be read in order to be understood; that is, with a careful consideration of the times and places in which; the occasions upon which; and the persons to whom, particular matters were spoken; ---- they would be found (in the main at least) to be liable to as little obscurity as any of them. Whenever a true scholar meets with any seeming absurdity, or inconsistency, in any pages of a truly good author; he immediately concludes there must be some error--either in his own way of understanding him, or in the copy he makes use of; or else that there is some circumstance or other not known, and which, if known, would clear up the difficulty.

So in like manner, in all *scripture* difficulties; wherever any thing has an appearance of being inconsistent with the nature, government, and attributes of the good and all-wise God; or contradicts the more general and manifest tenor of his word; *there* it is a safe rule to conclude, that we labour under some secret mistake:---some circumstance, most undoubtedly, is either not well understood,
or

or not duly considered, by us; for 'truth is
'always consistent with every other truth'.

Let us endeavour to apply this maxim to
the case before us.

The person who propounded this query to
our Saviour, seems plainly to have been a *Jew*
--a man of the prevailing opinion of his coun-
trymen at that time; who had persuaded them-
selves, that none of the Gentile world, none
but *Jews*, would have any place in the king-
dom of the Messiah, or any part in the world
to come. And as the land of Israel was small,
and the people of Israel few in comparison
with all the other nations; so their way of
speaking was, that "few" (or *the few*, the
Jews) "only were to be saved",

In the second Esdras, an apocryphal book
of those times, you have this doctrine, in the
very words of the question in my text: "the
most High hath made this world for many"
(or for *the many*, the bulk of mankind) "but
"the world to come for few" (for *the few*,
the single nation of *Jews*.) And again; "as
"the earth giveth much mould whereof
"earthen vessels are made, but little dust
"that gold cometh of; even so is the course
"of this present world: there be many creat-

“ed, but few shall be saved”. And in the next chapter; “there may be many more of them which perish, than of them which shall be saved; like as a wave is greater than a drop”. You see here a jewish expression of a mere narrow jewish notion!

Our Saviour, in his reply to this querist, takes no kind of notice of the question as *be* intended to put it, and as it respected the salvation of Gentiles and Jews in *general*, but applies his answer to the Jews of that *particular time*; to the generation with whom he was *then conversing*. There indeed, and amongst *them*, he rightly supposed there would be but *few*, that would “enter in at the gate of life”; because *they themselves had made it strait*, and hard to pass: they had “taken away the key of knowledge”, as our Lord tells them, by their unreasonable and perverse opposition to the gospel, by their ill treatment and persecution of it's divine author, and of all the disciples that followed him. Not that the religion of Christ had in itself, in it's own nature or commands, any thing harsh and unpleasant; but the iniquity of the times kept men from embracing it, and discouraged and abused all that *did* embrace it.

it. The words therefore, which we render "narrow is the way", were meant by our Lord to signify "it is an afflicted, a persecuted way, that leadeth to life". This was the reason why, so few, in those days, had the courage to try the way to heaven:-- "It was through *much tribulation* that they must enter into the kingdom of God: "and all that would *then* live godly in Christ Jesus, must *suffer persecution*", as St. Paul speaks of those times.

In the same sense is this apostle to be understood, when he talks of "*the small remnant* that is to be saved";---not a small remnant, out of *all mankind*; but a remnant of the *jewish people*; especially the Jews of *that generation*, the generality of whom wilfully shut their eyes against the truth, and rejected the light which God had afforded them. And when St. Peter compares the good christians that shall hereafter be saved, to the eight persons who alone were saved in the general deluge; it would be unreasonable to interpret him of any other, than of the christians of *those ages and generations only*.

Again; when our Saviour, in the very passage from which the text is taken, speaking

ing of the persons who shall be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, tells us that they will begin to plead, "Lord, we have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets"; it is self evident that these words were pointed, *directly* and *immediately*, at the nation and people to whom he was *then preaching*.

Once more; when he concludes some of his parables with this caution, "many are called but few chosen"; he ought by no means to be considered as declaring in the *general*, that "the number of them that will be saved at the great day, will bear little or no proportion to that of those who will be condemned": no; his main intention was, to shew the fatal error of the men of *that time*; and of foolish men in all other times, who depend upon the mere outward name and profession of the true religion, without the inward essential qualities of piety and a good life. "many are called" &c.---that is, 'in this, or any other remarkably corrupt age, abundance will profess themselves of God's true Church; but few, in comparison, will so live and act, as to be worthy of it's final blessings'. Unless you thus restrain the meaning

meaning of the words, the conclusions you will draw from these and the like parables, will run as much too far *one way against* you, as the *other way for* you. Thus, in that of the ten virgins, because five of them were wise, and five foolish; to infer from thence, that at the last day, the numbers of the righteous and the wicked, of them that will be admitted into the kingdom of God, and of those that will be shut out, will be exactly equal to a *single man*, would be a strange way of arguing! As also, because in the parable of the marriage feast, many were invited, and great numbers came; and only *one* of the guests was found without a wedding garment, and turned out; would any rational man gather from hence, that *one soul only* shall be condemned and perish at the last judgment? No! the purport of these figurative discourses is to warn us, that *whoever* are unwise, and careless of their duty; whoever are void of goodness and virtue; be they more, or be they fewer; be they who, or what they may; they will all be excluded from the joys of God's kingdom. In short; these scriptures never make, nor were ever designed to make, any absolute comparison between the *numbers* of
such

such as will be finally saved, or finally lost. They only set forth the qualifications requisite to save *all* men; namely, righteousness, and a watchful care, and a good improvement of the talents and graces committed to us all; and the certain reasons why *any* will be left to perish, viz. wilful negligence, and deliberate vice.

In times and places of great and general depravity; in days of persecution, and hard trial; the number of the faithful prove to be but few: and where "iniquity abounds, the love of many will of course wax cold". But all times are not such, nor so hard: God forbid! And when St. John says, "the whole world lieth in wickedness"; he could mean it only of the generality of the world, as it *then* was; he could not intend it of all the numberless *succeeding* ages, as his own words will presently demonstrate. For these same scriptures, that speak of the Jewish people as affording no more, at one time, than a "small remnant to be saved", have a glorious promise of a season still to come, wherein that nation shall be converted, and become righteous, and "*all Israel shall be saved*". And though in some ages the *Gentile* christians may yield
but

but a slender harvest of good and chosen men; yet God has assured us there are days to come, when his people will all be holy, and “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea”: when “the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ”. And they will not be a few, absolutely speaking, who, at the completion of all things, will be found in Christ’s kingdom: St. John gives you a more comfortable account of them: “a *great multitude*”, says he, “which *no man could number*, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the lamb; clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands”; that is, crowned with glory and happiness.

Upon the whole then, you see what is the “strait gate”, and the “narrow way, that leadeth to life”; namely, “the discouragements that good christians labour under, in times of corruption and persecution; whereby many are drawn into measures that make for their *present safety*; and few have the resolution to give up that safety, though it be to gain *eternal salvation*”.

After

After this explanation of the former parts of the text, the latter words of it, which seemed at first the most difficult, will now appear easy to be interpreted: "many, I say, unto you will seek to enter in, and shall not be able".---Could it possibly be said, think you, of any of those *Jews* of our Saviour's time, that if they had really and honestly sought the kingdom of God, they could not have found it? Or, in any generations of the *christian world*, can it be affirmed, that many a serious and sincere mind may study and strive after virtue, and yet never be able to learn it; or that when he *has* attained and practised it, he may yet, after all, lose the *reward* of it? These, indeed, would be "hard sayings; and who could hear them"! This would be utterly destructive of the character of true piety, which reason shews us to be obvious and natural to all good minds, and the scriptures always describe under the titles of *truth* and *light*---bright and pleasant to the eye of every understanding: for "wisdom is easily seen and found of such as seek her"---says the wise man. This would be enough to confound all our just and most amiable ideas of God, and of Christ"; "who
" would

"would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth"; and is the "sure rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.

Plain it is therefore, beyond all exception; that those *seekers*, who fain would enter the gate of heaven, but shall not be able, are only of two sorts;---they that seek in a *wrong way*, and in wilful error;--and they that seek *too late*, that neglect the fair and proper *time* to seek in. The Jewish people, in the days of our blessed Lord--what an instance were *they* of the former of these ways! St. Paul in the 9th chapter of his epistle to the Romans, tells them expressly, how they came to be rejected and to forfeit the blessings of pardon and salvation---"Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained unto it. And wherefore? because they sought it not by faith". They set up *their own* righteousness; their own way of salvation; instead of following *that*, which God had appointed them. They did, as too many *christians* have done, and still do: they would not secure their reward by active virtue, by real faith, and a conscientious practice of Christ's holy law; but by the observance of a few external

ternal rites, and Jewish ceremonies, by being zealous for certain forms, and modes, and characteristics of a party. St. James is still plainer with them: "ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss":--- "men who neither aim at, nor pray for, true goodness, in order to happiness, must needs fail at last of an entrance into it: their means are wrong; and consequently the end can never answer."

Lastly; our Lord has shewn us another reason, why many imprudent persons "seek the kingdom of God" without effect---not because the door was never fairly and kindly opened to them, but because they seek and come too late. Thus, in the words immediately following the text; "they shall not be able to enter---because the master "of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door"---they have out-stayed the long and merciful time allowed them! So the foolish virgins were all called, had early notice and warning given them, as well as the wise: but at the hour when they ought to have been upon the watch, they were drowned in sleep, and lost their entrance!

A most

A most seasonable admonition to christians of all ages and places! a lesson of abundant caution to all those negligent, idle creatures, who defer all their searches after heaven and happiness, till old age, or a death-bed sickness, has rendered them unfit for every virtue, that should prepare and qualify them for the enjoyment of it. These are the many *amongst us*, who may be said to seek indeed, but to seek in vain.

Before you had squandered away your time and strength, and abilities for God's service; the gate was neither strait, nor narrow:---it stood wide open, and you were fully welcome to enter into it: but *now*, when you can do nothing, you ask every thing: now, when you are totally incapable of *work*, you beg earnestly, and cry aloud for your *reward*.

But I find myself drawn insensibly, into a part of that *application*, which I must reserve for another occasion.

To God only wise.---

SERMON XXVIII.

LUKE, xiii. 23, 24.

Then said one unto him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And he said unto them, strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

IN order to arrive at the just and proper use that ought to be made of these words; I have endeavoured to explain to you the original meaning and occasion of the question here put to our Lord, and of the several parts of the reply he makes to it.

The *few*, whom the querist supposed would be saved, were the Jews only; few in comparison with *all the rest* of the world: the *few* to whom our blessed Saviour seems to allow

salvation, whether Jews or Gentiles, have a special relation to the *particular time he lived in*, and the persons to whom his Gospel was *first* preached; whose perverseness and violence of temper, whose malicious and cruel opposition to the true religion, discouraged and deterred the generality of men from embracing it. And his words will also respect, and be applicable to, any *other* particular ages, wherein the *like evil spirit* of obstinacy and corruption may prevail.

In all such seasons (but it is only in such) there are, comparatively speaking, but *few* that, with manly and christian fortitude, will “work out their own salvation.” But *these few*, I say, have reference to *some certain* generations only: absolutely, and upon the whole, there will be *many* saved at the last and final accomplishment of things.

Nor do any of our Saviour’s discourses, or any other scriptures whatever, design at all to express any *general proportion* between the *numbers* of those that will be saved, and of those that will perish; but the *qualifications and conditions only*, that will fit the one for happiness, and doom the other to certain punishment.

The

The gate of heaven therefore, and the way of righteousness, is not strait, difficult, or dangerous, in it's *own nature*, or by any direct *appointment of God*; but quite the reverse. *Accidents of time*, and the wickedness of men, may *sometimes* render it more hard for good men to hold fast their integrity: and this is the noble trial of faith, intended by providence to heighten their reward, and make their crown the more glorious.

They who seek to enter into the kingdom of God, can never fail of admission, but through their own default and neglect. Some may seek too late; others in a wrong and perverse way; and yet the plain and direct path lies all the while open before them. For virtue and happiness are ever easy to be found by all those who seek them in God's appointed time, and by a diligent, even though imperfect obedience to the laws of Christ Jesus.

The result of this explanation of the text, will consist of several very clear and useful reflections, that may be of satisfaction to the inquiries of some, of great comfort to the doubts and fears of others, and of seasonable admonition to us all.

ist then; it appears very plainly, how impossible it is to come to any determination, 'whether the majority of mankind will be of the number of the saved, or of the condemned part.' The subject has no lights to guide us in it: the scriptures never deal in questions of this sort, nor ever shew the least inclination to gratify mens curiosity concerning them.

Honest and well meaning Christians, whose lot of life happens to fall in an age of irreligion and vice, are wont to be disheartened at the woful prospect of the final state of their fellow creatures. To think that the far greater part of their own *species*, of their own *image*, will utterly perish and be undone, is a most *uncomfortable* thought! But here they do not consider how far they may err in their calculation. They draw their conclusion, perhaps, from their *own times* only, and a *partial* view even of what is *before* them; and do, as injudicious and unskilful spectators do at a *play*,--- 'censure the plot, 'without seeing the last act, and staying till 'the last scene be closed'. Many ages may abound in ignorance and sin; and notorious vices are apt to make a formidable appearance,

ance, and a dreadful sound, in the eyes and ears of pious and tender hearted men. But there are many examples of *virtue* likewise, in the worst of times; and a great deal of private goodness, that lies silent and unobserved. And, what is still more, we have seen the present age, and the ages past; of which it was foretold, that there should be much tribulation, and that iniquity should abound, in them; but we know not how many generations there are still to come; nor in how many of them the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, shall extend itself over the whole earth. The great and good Creator, who has all time in his own hands, can lose no time. He has seasons in an exhaustless store, wherein to ripen and perfect the dispensations of his providence, to complete his kingdom, and fill up the number of his saints!

No judgment therefore can possibly be made, nor any idea formed, from any thing we see at present, what will be the proportion of the righteous and the wicked, of the blessed and the damned, at the last account of things.

But 2, ' whatever the balance of this number may be, and how much soever that of

‘ the miserable may exceed that of the chosen
‘ and happy part ; there can be no room for
‘ any impeachment of the justice and good-
‘ ness of God, or of his Christ’. This is a ma-
nifest consequence, both from the nature of
the thing, and from all the representations of
holy scripture. For how many soever may
neglect their duty, and perish by so doing ;
yet they every one *knew* and *felt*, and will for
ever *confess* and *be conscious*, that they had a
rule and a law to direct them to happiness ;--
a rule of perfect equity, a “ law of perfect li-
berty” ! a rule, clearer indeed, and brighter,
to some than to others, but evident enough to
all *as far as they had it* : and according to
the *light and advantages* *be enjoyed*, will the
universal judge deal with every man. To
whom little was given, of *them* will little be
required ; but where much was graciously
bestowed, there much not only may, but *must*
be demanded. Even in the punishment of
wicked men, there will be displayed as exact
proportions of justice, and of the divine dis-
pleasure or compassion, as there will of love
and bounty in the reward of the righteous.

Indeed when many persons talk or think of
heaven and hell, of being saved or damned ;
their

their notion both of the one and the other appears to be exceedingly crude and imperfect. They seem to look upon them, as two contrary states, or two opposite *places*, appointed for two sorts of men *in the gross*: the several *proportions*, either of bliss or suffering, are little thought of by them: though in those proportions, beyond all doubt, consist the whole beauty and wisdom of the divine judgment. There must be as many degrees of punishment, as there are degrees of guilt; and as many degrees of happiness, as there are degrees of obedience and virtue. And in these various gradations of mens condition ~~in~~ another world, so agreeable to the greatness of right, and to the deserts and demerits of persons, it is not easy for *us* to conjecture, how near the lowest and least measure of punishment may approach to the lowest and least measure of happiness. Certainly there is the "prophet's reward", and the "righteous man's reward", and a still less reward that "shall in no wise be lost". There are the "many stripes", and "the few"; the painful "portion of hypocrites", and the tenderer sentence of a merciful judge upon *them*, who are found only *less watchful* than they ought to have been.

So that, let the iniquity of times be what it will; the crimes of men greater or less, and the numbers of the good and bad as you please; the divine proceeding will be most wisely adapted to every case; and Christ our judge will execute a "judgment that is everlasting righteousness, and a law that is truth".

3. From a right interpretation of these scriptures, must appear the strange and wretched mistake of those christians, who ascribe the smallness of the number of such as *they suppose* will be saved, to some absolute and arbitrary decree of God, by which he selects a chosen few, and rejects all "others";---an opinion, against which men can never be too often cautioned, since it effaces, and strikes out, every amiable character that is given us of God, and spoils the whole sense and purpose of our gospel account of rewards and punishments.

The term *election* is never used in scripture, but in one of these two acceptations. In the *general* it means the same with our being originally called to the gospel religion and privileges. Thus those churches, or christians at large, who, St. Paul says, are "*called in Christ Jesus*", he says in another place are "*elected*"

“*elected of God*” “called to be saints” “chosen of “God”, “a chosen generation”.

In many other passages, it signifies the *acting* agreeably to the *design* of that calling, so as to be esteemed worthy of admission into God’s *future* and heavenly kingdom.

In the former sense, every christian is elected, or chosen; in the latter, they only are so, who, according to the necessary advice of the same St. Paul, “work out their own salvation “with fear and trembling”; who “give all “diligence” (by the virtues of a christian life) “to make their *calling and election sure*”.

So, in the epistle to the Colossians, the same persons, who are stiled *elect*, are enjoined to “put on, *as the elect of God*, bowels “of mercy, kindness, long suffering”. And, in the gospel of St. John, those very disciples, who are said to be *chosen* by Christ, are said likewise to be *ordained* (that is *commanded*) by him, “to bring forth much fruit” - - - “created unto good works, which God had “ordained that they should walk in them”, as St. Paul speaks, in his epistle to the Ephesians.

In the parables of the “marriage of the “king’s son”, and of the “bridegroom’s “feast”

“feast”, *all* the guests, *all* the ten virgins, were *called* and *chosen* to partake of the entertainment. Why, *at last*, they were not all chosen, the parables themselves inform you. Did the king, or the bridegroom, think you, *secretly resolve* to shut them out, at the time when he first invited them? Fie upon such an imagination--of them--much more of that God and Saviour *represented* by them?

Instead therefore of this vain and impious surmise, let me turn your thoughts to the one great and necessary qualification, that is to gain you admittance to the feast and kingdom of our Lord;--namely, the care of your *lamps*, the improvement of the light and knowledge and grace now afforded you;----the *wedding garment*, and the *white robe*, St. John so often speaks of; the habitual practice of that justice, innocence, and purity, of which these are the pleasing emblems, and which alone can fit you for the conversation and employments of that blessed state!

Remember likewise, that the supreme Master of the house, who has provided for you this robe of righteousness, expects that *you* should *put it on* yourselves. He has laid it before you, and given you strength to put it on.

on. Leave those creatures to their own delusion, who imagine the master himself is to come, and put it on *for* them;

4. ' While you are thus seeking an entrance into your Lord's kingdom, in the way of a sincere obedience to his commands; learn, from all that has been said, to give yourselves no fears or disquietude, either about the *general case of mankind* in another world, or about *your own* '.

The supposed certainty of never so general a failure of others, cannot at all affect the case of any particular good man. Each person's rule is clear to *him*; and his own conscience tells him what he *can* do, and what he ought to do. The fall of *men* should no more disturb you, than the former fall of angels. The Saviour, who exerciseth justice upon all the disobedient, loses none of his care towards the honest and faithful. Let not numbers affright you. If ever you be "worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection of the dead"; you will find God's house *there*, to be neither scanty nor empty: it will be full and glorious enough; and you will be ravished as well with the number, as with the

the quality of those, you are for ever to live and converse with !

Nor let the suspected case of even your nearest friends and relations break your peace of mind. They will all be in the hands of God : and you ought not only to acquiesce, but to rejoice, that he will deal with them agreeably to the measures of just and merciful government. Your desires, and wishes, and prayers for them *now*, are right and commendable : but *hereafter* all those relations will cease ; and your tender passions will have no place to damp your joys. *There* will be “ neither marrying, nor giving in marriage ” : it will be a new heaven, a new life : and as it was with your Saviour in *this* world, so will it be with *you* in the *next*---they who about you, and with you, “ are glorifying God, and doing his will, *they* will be your “ brothers and sisters and mothers”.

5. ‘ If we have seen, what is the true sense, ‘ wherein few are said to be saved ; what is ‘ the cause, that many seek after life and happiness, but cannot attain them ; and why ‘ the gate of heaven is at any time, strait, and ‘ difficult to pass ;---it would become us,
‘ and

and highly it concerns us, to apply all this
to ourselves, as christians of this parti-
cular age, of this peculiar time and nation'.

When you look into the days, and amongst
the men, our Saviour had to do with; you
find great discouragements, and a cruel treat-
ment of all that embraced his religion - - - a
plain reason why *so few* had the fortitude, to
make open profession of it, or to live up to
it's laws and precepts.

If you consult the three first chapters of
St. John's revelation, you see the seven pri-
mitive eastern churches described as undergo-
ing many hard trials; and commended by
our Lord for a good degree of constancy
and perseverance. And yet, as soon as they
began to fail, and to grow cold in faith and
practice; severe reproofs, and reproaches, and
threatnings, are laid upon them.

If again, you take a view of the corrupti-
ons and tyranny and persecutions, the western
churches have long groaned under, from the
power of Antichrist, that is, the spirit of po-
pery; and of your own nation, what share
she has had in this calamity in the ages past;
in all such times of darkness and slavery, it
could

could hardly be expected that the generality would hold up firm, and not be carried away with the powerful stream.

But, in the course of *our* lives, there has been, in this happy island, quite another face of things. We have been, by almost a peculiar providence, the seat of liberty, and invaluable peace. No civil war has distracted our minds; no spiritual tyranny has racked our consciences; no fires, nor inquisitions, have offered violence to our religious principles. But, on the contrary, our very government, as well as our church, has been christian; our princes patrons of freedom, and of their country; and we have nothing to do, if we were truly wise, but to bless God for the light of his gospel, and to live soberly and righteously, in all quietness and honesty.

And should the query in the text be *now* turned upon *ourselves*---Is the gate of heaven strait to *us*? Is *our* way to life narrow, and hard to find? Amidst all our improvements of knowledge, all our advancements in learning, all our blessings of a peaceful life and liberty of conscience; are there but few of *us*, that will at last be saved?--It is an alarming,
and

and a terrible question ! And I have no business to give any positive reply to it. Look each one of you to himself : there your grand concern lies ! All I can say is, that as our difficulties are less, and our advantages greater, than those of many others ; our wilful crimes must be the more hainous, and our condemnation the more just. And if *so* it shall be, that few of us be saved, and many perish ; loving darkness rather than the blessed light they enjoy, merely because their deeds are evil ;---those many will *greatly* perish ! And, while it will fare much better with the men of harder times, and darker ages ; *we* must make a part of that wretched number, of whom it is declared, that it “ shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, “ yea even Sodom and Gomorrha, in the day “ of judgment, than for them”.

To God only wise.---

and a terrible question I find I have no but
needs to give any positive reply to it. I look
each one of you to himself, where you stand
conscience. All I can say is, that I have
difficulties myself, and our managers great
at least those of many others; our will
cannot be the more numerous, and our
conscience the more just. And if we
shall be the few of us be saved, and many
perish; losing darkness rather than the light.
But let us say, never, because that
does not tell, -- how many will err, and
will. And while it will be our duty
with the men of harder times, and darker
ages; we must make a part of that wretched
number, of whom it is said, that one
shall be righteous in the day and night.
I have even spoken of this in the day
before, and I have said, that I have
to God only, -- that I have
able to do, and I have said, that I have
wrote, as to giving them for the purpose
of saving them.
And I have said, that I have
to the men of this age, and I have
and of the men of this age, and I have
written, I have written, I have written
The

SERMON XXIX.

LUKE, vi. 27, to 32.

*But I say unto you which hear, love your enemies
 ---For if ye love them which love you, what
 thank have ye? for sinners also love those that
 love them.*

THERE is, and there can be, but one principal end of religion, or true philosophy: and that is, to regulate and improve the minds of men, to sweeten their tempers, and render them so easy and agreeable to each other in the society of one world, as to qualify them for the superior enjoyments of another.

And as this great design is extremely plain, so the means of attaining it are equally clear and obvious to the reason of every uncorrupt mind.

The nature and attributes of God the creator and father of all rational beings, are capable of being set in the strongest light to persons of very low abilities: and the rules for our conduct in the worship of *Him*, and in our dealings with *one another*, may be reduced to as undeniable certainty, as truths of any other kind.

And yet it is melancholy to reflect, how little benefit the generality of men have reaped from these advantages. They of old time, who had the guidance and free use of reason, darkened and debauched it: and, though it was given them on purpose that they should “feel after God, and easily find him, in “whom they lived and moved and had their “being”; yet, in the ages most famed for learning in the heathen world, the civil governors and priests and teachers were sadly ignorant of their Maker; and even the philosophers themselves either knew little, or would venture to say very little, concerning the true way of worshipping and serving him.

When St. Paul first preached the Gospel at Athens (Acts xvii.) it might well have been expected that he would have found an auditory

tory of grave sentiments and solid apprehensions in the things of God, and of natural religion. Hither, to this eminent university and seat of learning, resorted all the philosophers of every sect and from every quarter; men of the highest accomplishments in every part of literature. But, when the apostle came to look into their religion, no wonder you read that "his spirit was stirred in him" --for he found it was all superstition. He saw altars to this God, and to the other God; and at last an altar to an *unknown God*; for so indeed the one true God was to *them*; and the apostle was forced to bring them back to the very first alphabet of religion, the unity, and spiritual nature, of the Deity: "Him
" therefore whom ye ignorantly worship, *Him*
" declare I unto you; God that made the
" world", &c.

It were very natural to remark from hence, the great use and necessity of a divine revelation. Those sceptical gentlemen, who seem to think there is no occasion at all for it, may please to read here, "what woful work
" their predecessors in philosophy made
" without it".

When our blessed Saviour came to the Jewish people, he found them right indeed in their idea of God, and in a form of worship agreeable to his will and appointment; but he saw them as depraved in morals, as St. Paul found the Athenians in speculation and devotion. Their Doctors had left them such a set of traditions for *practice*, as rendered all their worship of no effect. In this chapter of St. Luke, and in the fifth of St. Matthew, our Lord has confuted several of them; and that which comes under our present consideration, is "a mans behaviour towards his *enemies*".

The Jews had all along been taught a very false notion of what an enemy was, and how they ought to treat a man that was really such. One of their own nation, of their own religion, they held as a neighbour; all others they thought they had a right to esteem as enemies. "Loving their neighbour", was doubtless the command of God, and of nature; but "hating their enemy", though a real injurious enemy, was no part of the law of Moses, but was the addition of that tribe of men, who, in all times and under all religions, are friends to secular interest, to secular

lar policy, and a partial righteousness, though at the expence of all true piety.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said”
(by your Seribes and Rabbis) “thou shalt love
 thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but
 I say unto you, love your enemies. For if
 ye love them which love you, what reward
 have ye”

Upon this excellent subject, I purpose to
 shew you,

I. What kind and degree of love our Lord,
 and his religion make to be due to enemies.

II. What a strong and particular argument
 he here gives us for the practice of it.

III. I will take a more general view of the
 duty, and urge upon you the many other mo-
 tives that may induce you to observe it.

1st then, let us see what sort, and what
 degree of affection, our Lord and his gos-
 pel have made due to an enemy; that is,
 “to one whom we apprehend to be in him-
 self a bad man, and especially to be evil-
 affected to us, and desirous of doing us
 mischief.”

The love we are said to bear to any per-
 sons, may be considered in different accepta-
 tions, according to the different qualities of

the objects, or of the men with whom we have any concern.

There is a love of *esteem* and *admiration*, which is properly raised in the mind by the sense and experience of the superior abilities, the useful and valuable knowledge, the good qualities, or the good services, of any person. These draw forth from every ingenuous breast, perpetual love, praises and commendations. But this species of love can never be claimed, either as the religious or the natural right of any professed, or *secret enemy*. You may as soon love pain, for it's own sake; or make good and evil, pleasure and misery, to be one and the same thing; as you can set a true value upon what you know to be hurtful, or take delight in what you feel to be injurious to you.

Again; there is a love of *friendship*, arising from a similarity of tempers, from an harmony of studies and inclinations, and from mutual endeavours to oblige, and confer favours. But neither can *this* love be required of you towards your known adversary: because enmity and friendship are as opposite as light and darkness: and to be free and communicative, to open your heart, and lay your bosom

from naked, to such a man, would not be love, but folly; and have in it much more of the weak man, than either of the christian or the friend.

Lastly therefore; there is a love of *benivolence*; that is, a regard to, and desire of, the good and happiness of our whole species; ---which is what the holy scripture, always and every where, means by the word, which we so often translate *charity*. For, in truth, that word never signifies what we, of late days, commonly use it for; namely, *relief of the poor*---this is always expressed by *almsgiving*. But the religious and scripture charity, is that generous love of mankind, as our brethren, and as the image and sons of God, which leads us both to wish, and to promote, the welfare, peace and felicity of all men whatever.

Now *this* is the affection, that is due alike to neighbour, stranger, friend, and foe: and our blessed Lord has here specified in what acts and instances, and our own reason tells us with what circumstances, we are to exercise it towards an adversary. "To do good to them that hate us"---to do them the good that is proper for them, and is the common

good

good of christians, and of all men. Not to
 with a tyrant to have power, or to procure
 posts and preferments for an oppressor; not
 to help a miser or a spendthrift to get riches,
 or save the robber, or the rebel, from justice;
 but to seek their real and natural good, whe-
 ther of body, or of mind; not to return their
 injuries, though you may and ought to en-
 deavour to avoid them, and to bring them to
 the punishment which the laws of society
 demand; in a word, never to hate their
 persons, but their vices only.

Again; "to bless them that curse us, and
 "to pray for them that despitefully use us"—
 to pray for their *conversion* and *amendment*,
 for their recovery into that disposition of
 mind, into that practice and behaviour, which
 would restore them both to our friendly love,
 and to the favour of God "from whom
 "cometh every good and perfect gift".

Our Saviour has an expression or two upon
 this subject, which perhaps, to some persons
 of lower understanding, may need a little ex-
 planation: "to him that smiteth thee on
 "the one cheek, offer also the other; and
 "him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not
 "to take thy coat also". Now here it ap-
 pears,

pears, even from the words themselves, that this is spoken of light and tolerable injuries. It is a "stroke on the cheek", not a mortal wound, that is to be thus passed over. It is a *cloak* or a *coat*, not our most valuable goods, not our whole estate, that is to be thus easily parted with. And wherefore parted with? Why (as is most evident from the parallel place in St. Matthew) rather than enter into contention, or a law-suit, that, in all likelihood, would prove a much sorer evil, than we can possibly suffer from so trifling a loss.

II. And thus having briefly observed the true limits of this great duty, let us, next take notice of our Saviour's weighty and particular argument for the practice of it;—first, as applied to the *Jews*, the men to whom he was now preaching; secondly, as still more strongly applicable to *Christians*, considered either in societies and communities, or in the affairs of private life.

I. The *Jews*, especially in our Saviour's time, under the notion of being God's peculiar church and people, and as having the singular blessing of a revealed religion, were very liberal in bestowing odious and reproachful

ful characters upon all other nations. They stiled them *sinners*; as if they themselves alone deserved the title of *just* and *righteous*. The Gentiles they branded with this appellation in common; and the Publicans (that is, the gatherers of the taxes for the Roman government) in particular. The one they despised, as worthy of no benevolence; the other they hated, as enemies and oppressors.

Hence it is that publicans and sinners are so frequently ranked together in the New Testament: and St. Paul, in the second chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, complying with the language and humour of his countrymen, calls the Gentiles "*sinners of the Gentiles*."

Now, says our Saviour, if all your love be confined to your brother Jew, and if this be the sum total of your charity; what is become of the honour of your *law*, and the superior excellency of your boasted religion? The goodness of every religion is seen in the effects it has, or tends to have, upon the spirits and tempers of men; raising them to the imitation of the divine perfections, and forming

forming in them a resemblance of the Great Original of mercy and all virtues. Charity, or benevolence, is a duty founded in the very idea men have of God, the universal Father and Creator; flowing from the very nature of man, as a rational, social creature, the image of that God;---and therefore ought to be universal. Love of friends and neighbours, of near relations, and worshippers of the same Deity, is what is common to Pagans and Heathens: the Publican performs it, for interest's sake, and for reputation's sake: and even sinners against God, will shew themselves kind and civil to *some sorts of men*. If a Jew therefore is to rise no higher than this, it must be a shame either to the man, or to his profession. And what a reproach must it be to a worshipper of the true God, to be upon the mere level in virtue with the man who knoweth him not, nor ever enjoyed the light of his revealed law! "If ye love them that love *you*, what thank have ye? For *sinners* also love those that love *them*. Do not even the Publicans the same?"

Thus was our blessed Lord wont to point and sharpen his reproofs of the haughty Jews,
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by comparing them very justly with the *sinners* they so despised, and with the *unbelievers* they so greatly undervalued. How must it cut these men to the heart, to be told that *publicans* and *harlots* were nearer to the kingdom of heaven than themselves; and that *Samaritans* surpassed them in gratitude to God, and mercy to men!

2. The argument will still appear with additional strength, when you apply it to *christians*.

It is with great reason that we prefer our religion to all others: it's discoveries are more noble, it's morals more pure, more clear, and enforced by the highest authority. And while christianity was entertained and practised in it's native simplicity; it could not but charm every beholder with the conversation of all it's professors, in a life of humility, mutual forbearance, and charity. Friends tasted and enjoyed it, and even enemies admired at it!

But when once churches, and communities of christians, began to thrive in preferments, and affected power and pre-eminence; the christian meekness soon degenerated into pride and fierceness; charity failed, and every

ry lovely virtue fell into decay. And when Rome had advanced herself to be the head of this apostacy so plainly foretold in holy scripture, ~~then~~ dominion became the sole rule of piety; all were treated as enemies, that would not be friends to the prevailing party; and such as would not submit their faith, and yield up their conscience, must yield up their liberty, and their life.

Oh, what a dreadful change was here! that the deserts of Arabia, or the woods of the farthest Indies, should produce as good fruits of justice and humanity, as those men can shew, who call themselves the only church of that God who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good; and stile themselves the only true disciples of that Christ, who "came not to destroy mens lives but "to save them!

When the light of the reformation was struck out; protestants reformed, or pretended to reform, not only from the errors and false doctrines, but, chiefly and principally, from the whole *spirit* of popery; from the hateful and domineering, from the persecuting and revengeful spirit of it.

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If therefore any religious or other disputes, if any fiery zeal or factious quarrels, carry any of us to hatred and malice and contempt of each other; behold how heavy our Lord's reproach will lie upon us! "If ye love them only, that are of your own party and persuasion; if ye salute your brethren only; what thank have ye"? are ye the followers of that Jesus, who "gave himself a ransom for all"? Are ye the christian and reformed children of that God, whose sons are taught to be universally merciful as their "father who is in heaven is merciful".

Finally; in the conduct of private life; if when injuries are received, and offences given, we do not all learn to follow the pattern of our supreme father and kind redeemer; that is, to detest the vice, but yet to compassionate, and wish well to, the person of the offender;---if none but friends and brethern taste our bounty, and our goodness be extended to none but those that have done good to us;---let us not glory in the christian name, nor hope in the christian salvation. The ignorant followers of Mahomet, and the blinded bigots and slaves of Rome,

Rome, will put us to open shame; and they that never heard of a gospel, or a Saviour, will rise up in judgment against us. And, in the great day of the marriage supper of the lamb, when we may vainly hope to have a seat at that feast; "many shall come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven"; while we ourselves, with our uncharitable and unchristian spirit, shall be for ever shut out.!

SERMON XXX.

LUKE, vi. 27, to 32.

*But I say unto you which hear, love your enemies
---For if ye love them which love you, what
thank have ye? for sinners also love those that
love them.*

ALL languages, to avoid too great a multitude of words, are wont to make use of several terms and expressions, in a variety of senses; in higher or lower acceptations. And the want of attending to this, has been the occasion of many errors, disputes, and misunderstandings. Thus the holy scriptures use the words *love* and *charity*, to express the whole of our social duties towards men, out of regard to God whose image we all are. And as this love is to be considered and exercised in different manners and degrees, according to the different relations which particular men may bear to us; I have there-

fore remarked, for our clearer understanding of the great duty in the text, first, what kind and degree of love the gospel religion enjoins, as due to an *enemy*---not the love of *esteem* and *admiration*; for that can never be justly raised by the sight of bad qualities--nor yet the love of *friendship*; for such an affection can never be claimed by, can never consist with, ill nature, and injurious treatment.

But it is the love of *general benevolence*; which implies no more, nor less, than a desire of, and an endeavour after, the universal good and happiness of all the rational world, and of our whole species in particular. An affection very compatible with true *self-love*; restraining us, not from self-defence against public enemies, nor from legal redress of private injuries; but only from hasty passion, and a thirst of revenge; and leading us to such a conduct towards an enemy, as becomes rational creatures placed in society.

This being shortly stated, I proceeded to consider our Saviour's particular argument for the practice of it; as applied, first, to the *Jews*, to whom he was now speaking; and then to *us* christians, the professors of his religion. The sum of his argument is, that

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“ it would be the highest reproach to men
 “ living under the advantages, and enlight-
 “ ened with the knowledge, of true religion,
 “ to shew no greater generosity of spirit, nor
 “ more disinterested virtue, than ignorant or
 “ even vicious men will generally practise” --
 “ if ye love them that love *you*, what thank
 “ have ye? for *sinners* also love those that
 “ love *them*”.

III. I am now to treat this important duty more at large, and to try to set before you such *other* arguments, as, by the reason and nature of the thing, or by the immediate authority of God, may persuade you to the careful exercise of it.

And 1, let me recommend this benevolent and forgiving temper to an enemy, as ‘ one of the most shining instances of religion, or real piety’. I consider religion *now*, as it signifies the imitation of God, and that resemblance of the supreme mind, which it is the peculiar glory of an intelligent creature to aspire after.

Man, in the character of such a creature, endued with understanding, and freedom of action, is God’s image and offspring. By keeping all his passions in due subjection to

his reason, and preserving the decorum of his nature, he shews himself the son of that Father, who is the fountain of purity and perfection.

When we think upon almighty God, as the object of our worship, and imitation; there is no one attribute, that is wont to affect us with such admiration and love, as that which presents him to us under the amiable idea of kind and merciful. None is so pleasant to reflect on, as that unbounded goodness, diffused through the whole frame of things, and extending to the universe of rational subjects; even to those who deserve ill at the hands of this infinite and all powerful Governor.

Thoughtful and considerate men among the Heathens, took particular notice of this last article of divine goodness, and made the same use of it, as our blessed Lord and his apostles have done. Thus Seneca; "how many" says he, "are unworthy of the light; and yet the day perpetually shines upon them"! And again; speaking of the nature of the Gods, he makes this special remark upon them; that "they bestow their benefits upon the ungrateful, and are ready to

“to help those who make a bad use of their
“best favours”. This he applies to the man,
that is *loath to forgive his enemy*.

The scripture morals and commands are
nothing else than a revival, a new and stronger
sanction, of all the generous duties which na-
ture dictates, and man's right reason ever ap-
proved. When the books of God set him be-
fore your eyes in the noble and delightful
view of “the Lord gracious and merciful---
“pardoning iniquities---causing his sun to
“shine upon the evil and the good, and
“sending rain on the just and the unjust---
“the God of all mercy, of all comfort---
“who justifieth the ungodly---who would
“have all men to be saved, and come to the
“knowledge of the truth”;---the principal
and grand purpose, I say, of all these charm-
ing representations, is to correct the false no-
tion of those passionate and thoughtless men,
who are apt to look upon “benevolence to
“an adversary”, as a meanness of spirit, and
something beneath the bravery of a man.
Quite contrary to this, the goodness and
majesty of heaven is then most great and
adorable, when it stoops to the failings, and

pities even the sins, of those creatures, who little deserve it's mercy, and, strictly, merit no compassions.

And this is the substance of our Saviour's *other* argument in favour of the duty before us; namely, that "to do good to them that hate us", is to be "merciful, as our father who is in heaven is merciful"; and is enjoined us for this very reason, and with this very design, to "make us *the children of that father*".

2. From your thoughts of God, descend now into yourselves; and see whether this duty be not founded upon a principle truly manly, and rational.

There is hardly any thing more frequent in the mouths, or pretended to sit more closely upon the hearts, of most men, than a sense of honour. Nor is there any thing, either in word or deed, more perverted and abused. For honour is properly a due reverence of, and a tender regard to, such sentiments and actions, as tend to support the dignity of human nature in general, or to render us esteemed and beloved in our particular stations and situations in life. But for men to grace
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the effects of their mere passions with this eminent title, and to call that by the name of courage and spirit, which is really nothing but impotence, and a want of self-command; ---this is to violate a character, that ought to be held the most sacred. Hasty resentments, and a proneness to private revenge, are a proof of a little mind, that is easily discomposed; ill fit to govern others, when it so quickly loses all government of itself! They discover an heart not raised above the vulgar level, but rather declining downward towards the brutal kind. For, if *this* be courage, how must you admire the bravery of the tiger, or the fierceness of the lion? And if *this* be honour, how commendable is the peevish rage of the serpent, or the violence of a bear robbed of her whelps? If it becomes us to love those only, from whom we have received favours; *then* is the dog of an equally noble spirit, who never fails to follow and defend his master; and this generous creature *man* can but be compared with the "ox that knoweth his owner, and the ass that loveth his master, and his master's crib". But surely *we* have in *our* nature some superior qualities, some superior rule of action. Our sentiments
are

are not to be the fruit of our passions, but of our reason: and our behaviour under injuries received, ought not to take it's measures from merely selfish inclinations, but from humane and social maxims. A social creature is to exercise love, not only where it is attracted, but where it is free; not only where it is strictly due, but where it is undeserved; not where it is a claim, but where it is unexpected, and un hoped for. In the former of these cases, it may be very good and right; but in the latter, it is great, godlike, and christian!

3. As this behaviour is so admirable, and so highly worthy of every reasonable being; let me remind you, that it cannot but be equally pleasant and satisfactory. Hatred and aversion to any thing whatsoever, is a painful passion, and gives the mind great disturbance. When it is concerned with *persons*, it is still much more so; as persons are of more consequence than things. Whenever this passion transports you to an eager pursuit after revenge, I appeal to your own inward feelings, what a restless condition you are in! How does your heart fret and rage, like the stormy sea! And when you have carried your point,

point, and perfected your malice, and gained the cruel return upon your adversary; what remorse and compunction do you suffer from your reason and conscience! How often do you wish your innocence could be restored, and the cruel act un-done!

On the other hand, benevolence and forgiveness is a temper that ever flows from peace and quiet of mind, and ever ends in it. The very action itself springs from the most pleasant and sweet disposition: and every reflection upon it, renews the delight, and doubles the satisfaction.

In one word; what comfort can there possibly be, in remembering you have done what devils, and degenerate spirits are proud to do? What joy must it not afford you, to know you have done what the great author of goodness commands you to do, and always does himself?

Some persons it is true, imagine that revenge has a great deal of *sweetness* in it. Now sweetness, or pleasantness, must always be considered as relative to the palate, that is to judge of it. The sick man has quite lost all taste of what the healthy person enjoys--the mind answers to the body. Corrupt and vicious

cious spirits do, indeed, taste no *sweetness*, but in corrupt and base things. So the rude Indian and the Hottentot, taste the sweets of *rapine* and plunder; and the cannibal relishes the flesh of men---that is, he has the palate of a brute. In this sense, I allow, *revenge* may be sweet: but, to a judicious and well cultivated mind, there is no gall like the bitterness of strife and envy; no pleasure to compare with those of good nature, humanity and mercy!

4: You will be much encouraged to shew this benevolence to your enemy, when you recollect, that it is 'the best and readiest means, either to reclaim him, or to overcome him'.

To return an injury, is seldom or never the way to deal with a malicious temper; any more than the exasperating a *wound*, is the method to cure it. No man knows the consequences of "rendering evil for evil, "and railing for railing". The turns and returns of it are endless, and will inevitably fall upon the person injured, as well as the aggressor. Solomon has a most striking and animated comparison, to beautify this case with. "The beginning of strife is as
" when

"when one letteth out water": it is like cutting a passage through a sea-bank: the danger is, that you will drown your friends, and yourself, along with your enemies. "Therefore", says he, "leave off contention, before 'it be meddled with': the meaning is, 'leave it off, before you have meddled too much with it'.

On the other side, a conduct of gentleness and courtesy, has charms that will abate the edge of the keenest malice. Some dispositions, indeed, are wholly depraved, and must be left to human laws to correct. But, till it comes to this sad pass, mankind is a creature very capable of being wrought upon and reformed by generous treatment. An undeserved favour, an unexpected kindness in return for evil, surprises and captivates even the most insensible; and, like a dissolving fluid, wins it's way into the hard and stony heart. It is St. Paul's "coals of fire upon 'the head' of an enemy; serving either to aggravate his guilt, and to destroy him; or, which is yet far better, to melt him down into contrition and repentance.

What a number of edifying examples does the holy scripture give us, of this irresistible greatness

greatness of mind. How was Esau's spleen and resentment raised against Jacob! But Jacob's superior behaviour made him forget it all, till he "fell upon his neck, and kissed him". What furious spirit was there in Saul against David! Yet David's heroic generosity brought him to his tears, and forced him to cry out "thou art more righteous than I"---How noble is the victory, when you bind a man without struggling, and conquer your adversary without blood!

5. But, in the last place, our blessed Master has enforced this virtue upon *us christians*, by the strongest of all arguments and obligations---by making *our* forgiveness of *others* the indispensable condition, on which *we ourselves* are to expect pardon at the hand of *God*, and by resting all the good effect of our prayers, and other services, upon it.

Indeed our Saviour seems to have designed to work up this argument to it's utmost height; as truly sensible how difficult it is to bring the passionate part of mankind to a compliance with this most christian duty. In the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew, he puts it in the lively and affecting dress, of a great personage, and an insolvent debtor.

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The debt is fixed at ten thousand talents, a sum almost incredible, that might make it appear like a romance, instead of a parable. But the nature of the case required it to be set in so strong a light. No sum, no debt, is great enough to express the number, or the aggravated guilt, of those offences, which *we* commit against the sovereign authority, against the infinite majesty and goodness, of our Creator. The wickedest servant of earthly masters, is not one half wicked enough to paint the ingratitude of that man, who is loath to forgive his brother a few pence, while he himself labours under a debt of talents, and of trespasses against his heavenly Lord and Saviour, that has made him a bankrupt for ever! Finally; what parable or figure can be too extravagant, to describe the meanness of that man's soul, who hopes to bribe his Maker into a composition for the inward cruelty and hardness of his heart, by a few vain gifts at the altar, or a few external ceremonies of worship! No, says our divine moralist, "leave thy gift before the altar---" "and go thy way----first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift". And when the unforgiving and merciless

merciless servant was bound hand and foot, and delivered to the tormentors; "so likewise " shall my heavenly Father do also unto " *you*, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses". This the wise son of Sirach plainly saw, long before: " he that revengeth, shall find vengeance of the Lord; and he will surely retain " his sins. Forgive thy brother the hurt that " he hath done thee: so shall *thy* sins also be " forgiven, when thou prayest. One man " beareth hatred against another: and doth " *he* seek pardon from the Lord? He sheweth no mercy to a man like himself: and " doth *he* ask forgiveness of *his own* sins"?

Thus does the gospel and religion of Christ reinforce the genuine religion of nature, and confirm what she had spoken by the mouth of the best and wisest men.

To the King eternal.----

END OF VOL. I.

